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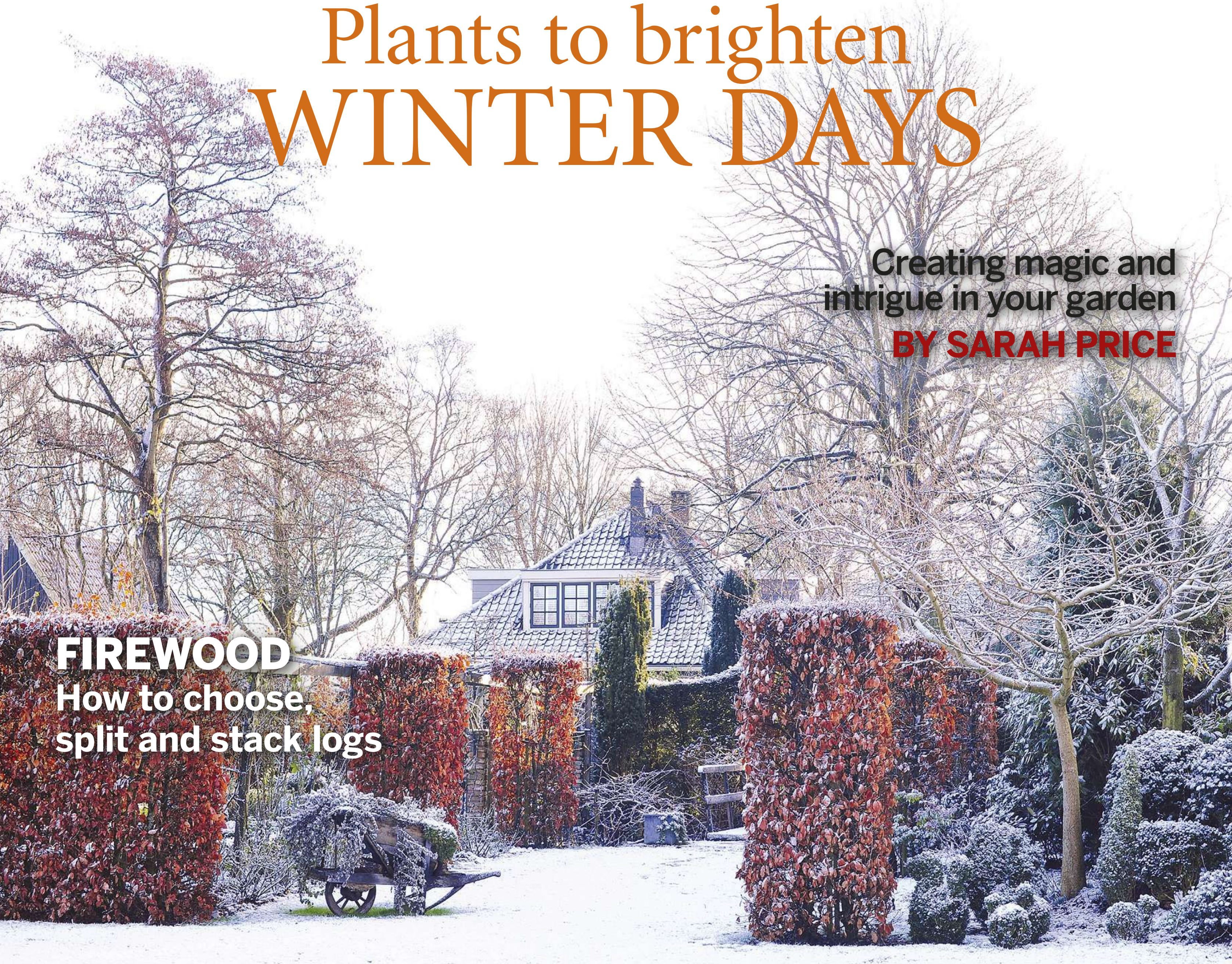
Plants to brighten WINTER DAYS



Creating magic and intrigue in your garden

BY SARAH PRICE

FIREWOOD

How to choose, split and stack logs

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Our guide to the perfect presents for gardeners

Make your own botanical advent calendar

Fabulous festive lighting ideas

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editor's letter

I have to admit that I don't often venture out into my garden during the winter months. It's still very much a work-in-progress and there's far too much mud and mess. It's better to stay indoors and watch the season unfolding through the picture windows at the back of my house. There are some wonderful old trees at the very end of the garden that frame the view and draw the eye, but I'm still working out what should happen nearer the house. This month Sarah Price provides much food for thought with her Design Ideas feature in which she looks at how to create atmosphere, intrigue and interesting transitions from one area to the next. Rosemary Alexander, principal of the English Gardening School, recommends the best plants for winter interest, and I suspect that many of those she suggests would make perfect specimens to snip and bring indoors. It's easy to think of pressing flowers as just a summertime activity, however, Sonya Patel Ellis shows us how to create a charming botanical Advent calendar, and this would make a lovely excuse to investigate the garden or to take a country walk. Gardens can always benefit from a bit of twinkle and Christmas is the perfect excuse to buy outdoor fairy lights. Kristy Ramage – designer, artist and stylist extraordinaire – suggests some inspiring ideas to make your garden glow this winter. We've also got great suggestions for gifts for gardeners and don't forget you can find some lovely products at the *Gardens Illustrated* shop. I hope you enjoy the issue and wish you a very happy Christmas.

Juliet

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WINTER DAYS
GREAT IDEAS FOR CHRISTMAS

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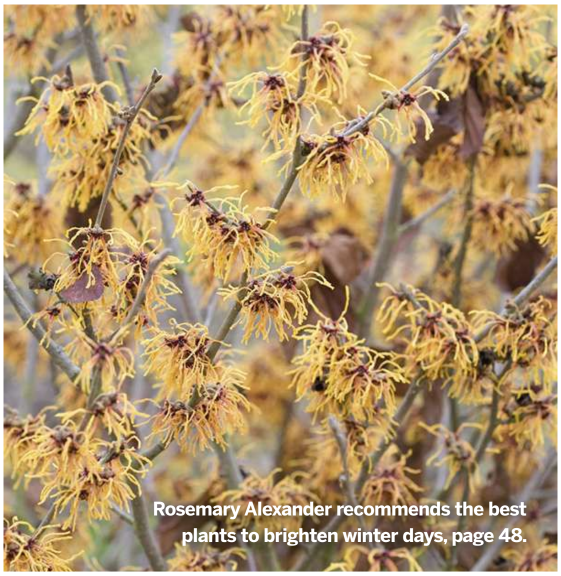

Rosemary Alexander recommends the best plants to brighten winter days, page 48.

Give your garden some twinkle this Christmas with Kristy Ramage's inventive lighting ideas, page 58.

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GAP PHOTOS/SHARON PEARSON, ANDREW MONTGOMERY

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Die Langhuys
Photography by
Sietske de Vries

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ANNETTE LEPPLE / GAP PHOTOS; ANDREW MONTGOMERY

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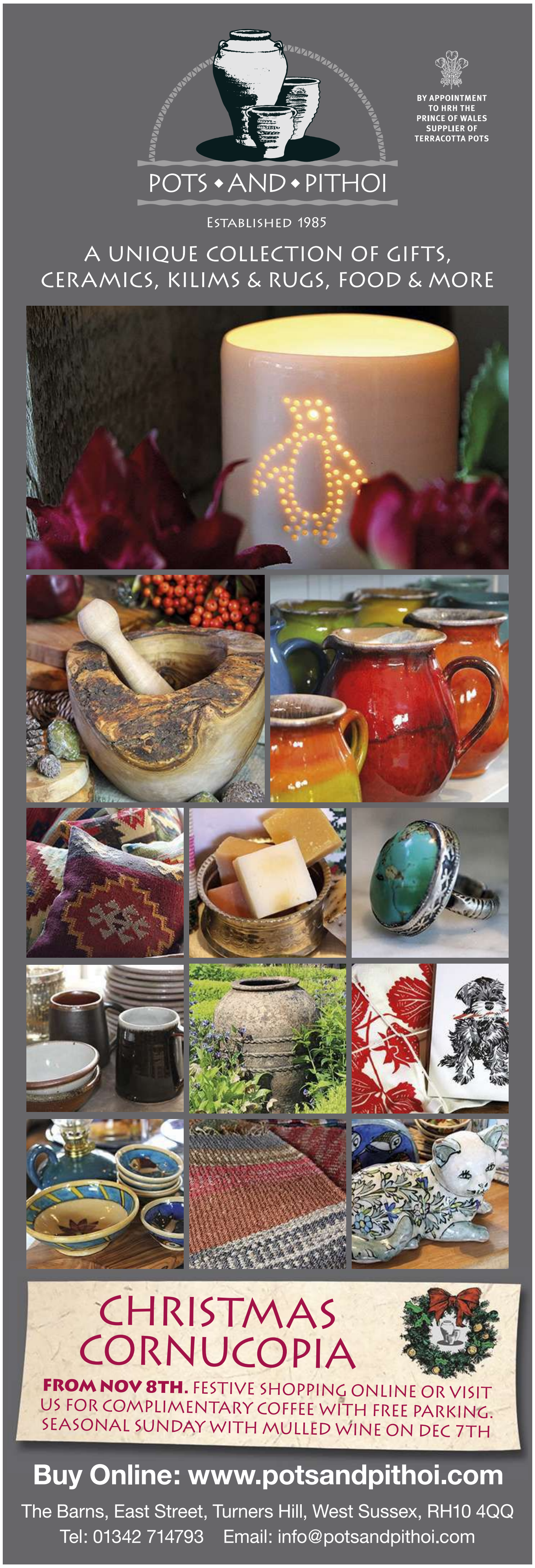
CAROLE DRAKE, ANDREW MONTGOMERY



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GEORGE LEPPEL

ANNETTE LEPPLE

Annette is a garden designer, writer, author and photographer who considers herself lucky to be doing work she's passionate about. This year she won the European Garden Photography Award. On page 70 she has photographed her own garden in southern France.

"Hoar frost and the stunning light worked their magic and made me completely forget that I don't like winter."

JULIET NICHOLS

ROSEMARY ALEXANDER

Rosemary is principal of The English Gardening School and in 2011 she was awarded the RHS Veitch Memorial Medal for her contribution to garden design. On page 48 she chooses some of the best plants to brighten a winter garden.

"Plants that perform during the shorter winter days are less well known, but the ones that do succeed are much valued."

ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Andrew's photography career began at 14 with a dark room in the garden. Today with clients across Europe, he's kept very busy, not least by *Gardens Illustrated* where this issue his sumptuous work can be found on pages 35, 44, 58, 76 and 95.

"The Herbarium Project was one of the year's highlights. To shoot something so creative in such a simple way was a real pleasure."

CHARLIE HOPKINSON

KATHERINE SWIFT

Katherine lives and gardens at the The Dower House at Morville Hall in Shropshire and has written several books about her life there. On page 64 she discovers the charms of winter at Ashley Farm in Herefordshire, a formal garden with echoes of its agricultural past.

"I loved the drama of this garden in winter – the white trunks of birch and contorted branches of apple trees against dark hedges."

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welcome

Join us for the second *Gardens Illustrated* Festival, now in the beautiful Cotswold town of Tetbury. Taking place over the weekend of 22-23 April 2016, the festival will once again gather together an eclectic and exciting line-up of speakers – offering a fascinating programme of talks on a range of horticultural topics.

Building on the success of last year's event, we have moved location from Malmesbury to the nearby and the equally charming Cotswold town of Tetbury, allowing for more festival activities in one place. Alongside the talks there will be a marquee selling a fine selection of plants and gardening goods from some of our favourite companies and artisan makers. You'll also find our garden plant and design clinic offering individual advice, a series of workshops, and freshly made teas, coffees and lunches.

And, as with last year, we'll also be organising guided tours of local gardens.

Confirmed speakers for 2016 include: Arne Maynard, Cleve West, Roy Lancaster, Tim Richardson, Mark Diacono, James Alexander-Sinclair, Fergus Garrett, Jinny Blom, Carol Klein, Helen Dillon, Troy Scott Smith, Val Bourne, Matthew Wilson, Marina Christopher and Chris Beardshaw.

Full details of all events and how to book can be found at

gardensfestival.com

TIM GAINEY / ALAMY; 2015 FESTIVAL IMAGES BY JASON INGRAM; PORTRAIT OF HELEN DILLON BY JANE SEBIRE

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Dig in

What's happening, where to go, what's in flower and what to buy this month

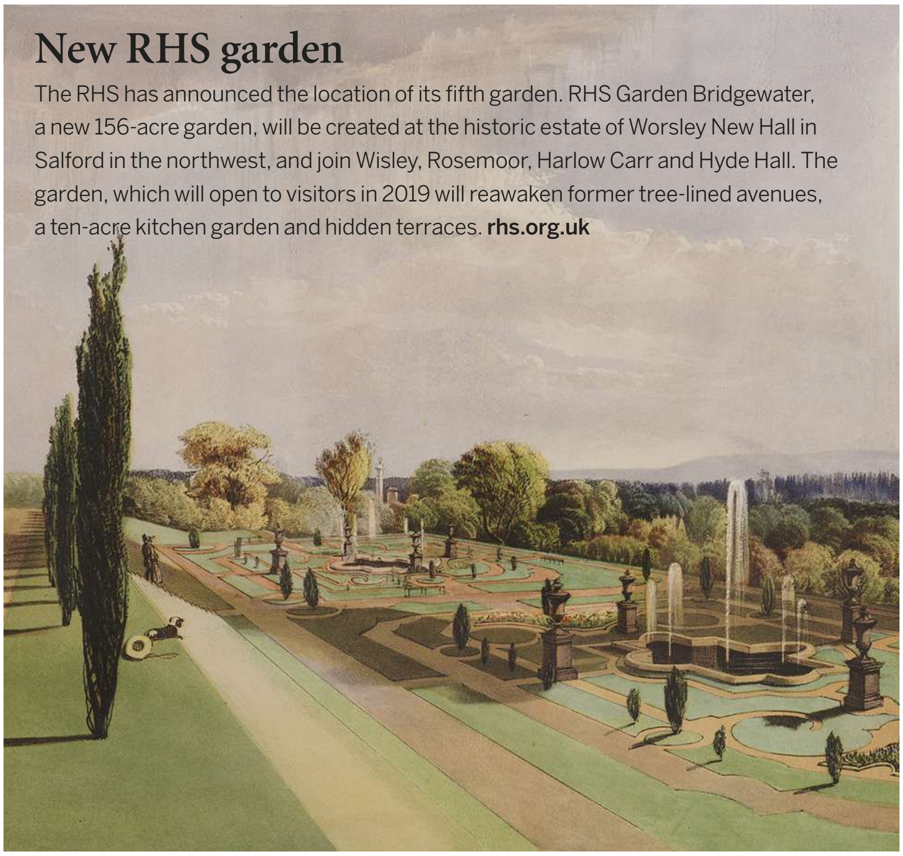
NEWS COMPILED BY SORREL EVERTON AND ALYS HURN

WINTER WALK

Holly go brightly

Glossy leaves and bright berries – not to mention its key role at Christmas – make holly one of our most appealing winter plants. RHS garden Rosemoor in Devon is home to a National Collection with some 160 different types of holly, all of which can be enjoyed throughout the winter season as part of a new holly trail. To mark the trail's opening, join a talk on 1 December to find out more about the diversity of the collection. RHS Rosemoor, Great Torrington, Devon EX38 8PH.
Tel 0845 265 8072, **rhs.org.uk/gardens/rosemoor**

CLIVE NICHOLS / GAP PHOTOS



New RHS garden

The RHS has announced the location of its fifth garden. RHS Garden Bridgewater, a new 156-acre garden, will be created at the historic estate of Worsley New Hall in Salford in the northwest, and join Wisley, Rosemoor, Harlow Carr and Hyde Hall. The garden, which will open to visitors in 2019 will reawaken former tree-lined avenues, a ten-acre kitchen garden and hidden terraces. **rhs.org.uk**

The new RHS garden will bring long neglected features back to life.

Left The once grand hall of Worsley New Hall boasted fine terracing. The hall was demolished in the 1940s.

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EXHIBITION

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The spread of Dutch elm disease in the 1970s changed the face of the British countryside and many of our cities, including London. *Ulmus Londinium*, an installation at Somerset House, has been devised by the design duo Stables and Lucraft for The Conservation Foundation to celebrate the elm tree's heritage and raise awareness of attempts to reintroduce it. An accompanying app locates London's remaining elm trees and historical locations. Until 5 December. **conservationfoundation.co.uk**

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Wonderful Wakehurst

This year the 465-acre estate at Wakehurst Place in Sussex celebrated '50 years of Kew', taking a look at its development from private country estate to becoming part of the Royal Botanic Gardens and home to the Millennium Seed Bank. You can appreciate the gardens in full with a Friends of Wakehurst Membership for £30, offering unlimited year-round entry and one free ticket to Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. **Tel 01444 894067**, **kew.org/visit-wakehurst**

IN THE GARDEN

Plant support specialist Muntons has brought out a new SlimJim range including hoops, obelisks and stakes. The slimmer version uses 8mm diameter steel and is better suited to smaller or cottage gardens where space in borders is more limited. **Tel 0800 130 3421**, **muntons.net**

Sweet tin

Easton Walled Garden in Lincolnshire is famed for its exuberant sweet pea displays. Now the garden team has created the Sweet Pea Seed Gift Tin including six seed packets of their favourite sweet peas, labels, and expert advice. £18. Tel 01476 530063, shopateaston.co.uk

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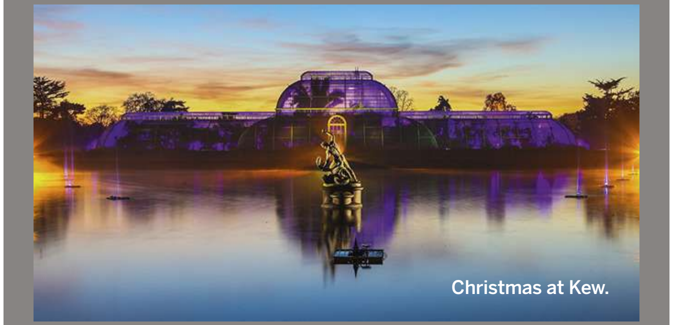

Christmas at Kew.

• **Mistletoe Festival**
Tenbury Wells, the capital of English mistletoe, hosts an annual event to celebrate its mistletoe heritage. Mistletoe auctions on 24 November, and 1 and 8 December, 10am at Burford House Garden Store, Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire WR15 8HQ. thegardenstore.ltd.uk On 5 December the town hosts a Festival Day with performances and activities. tenburymistletoe.org

• **Christmas at Kew**
Illuminated mile-long trail leads visitors beneath lit tree canopies and alongside glowing waters. 25 November – 2 January. Timed entry between 5-8.15pm, £16 adults, £48 family. Please check for available dates. The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Tel 0844 995 9675, kew.org/christmas

• **Festive Shopping Days**
Find the perfect horticultural gifts for family and friends at the Chelsea Physic Garden. 1-4 and 6-11 December, 10am-4pm. Chelsea Physic Garden, 66 Royal Hospital Road, London SW3 4HS. Tel 020 7352 5646, chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk

• **Plants with Provenance**
Exhibition of paintings by artist Emma Tennant inspired by famous plant hunters of the 19th and 20th centuries and Emma's own encounters with plants in the 21st century. 2-10 December. The Fine Art Society, 148 New Bond Street, London W1S 2JT. Tel 020 7629 5116, faslondon.com

• **Christmas Wreath Course**
One-day course with professional florists to create a traditional moss-based wreath covered in seasonal foliage. 3 or 4 December, 10.30am – 1.30pm, £88, RHS Garden Wisley, Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB. Tel 020 3176 5830, rhs.org.uk/wisley

• **Looking Forward to Winter**
Ross Barbour of Picton Gardens gives inspiration on plants that give you colour, scent and texture through winter. 8 December, 2-4pm. £11. Hosted by RHS Centre, Pershore College at Picton Garden near Malvern. Tel 01386 554609, warwickshire.ac.uk/RHS

• **Floral Demonstration**
Demonstration by floral expert Jonathan Moseley sharing tips and techniques for creating a table centrepiece and door wreath. 15 and 16 December, 11.30am-2.30pm, £30. Chatsworth, Bakewell, Derbyshire DE45 1PP. Tel 01246 565300, chatsworth.org

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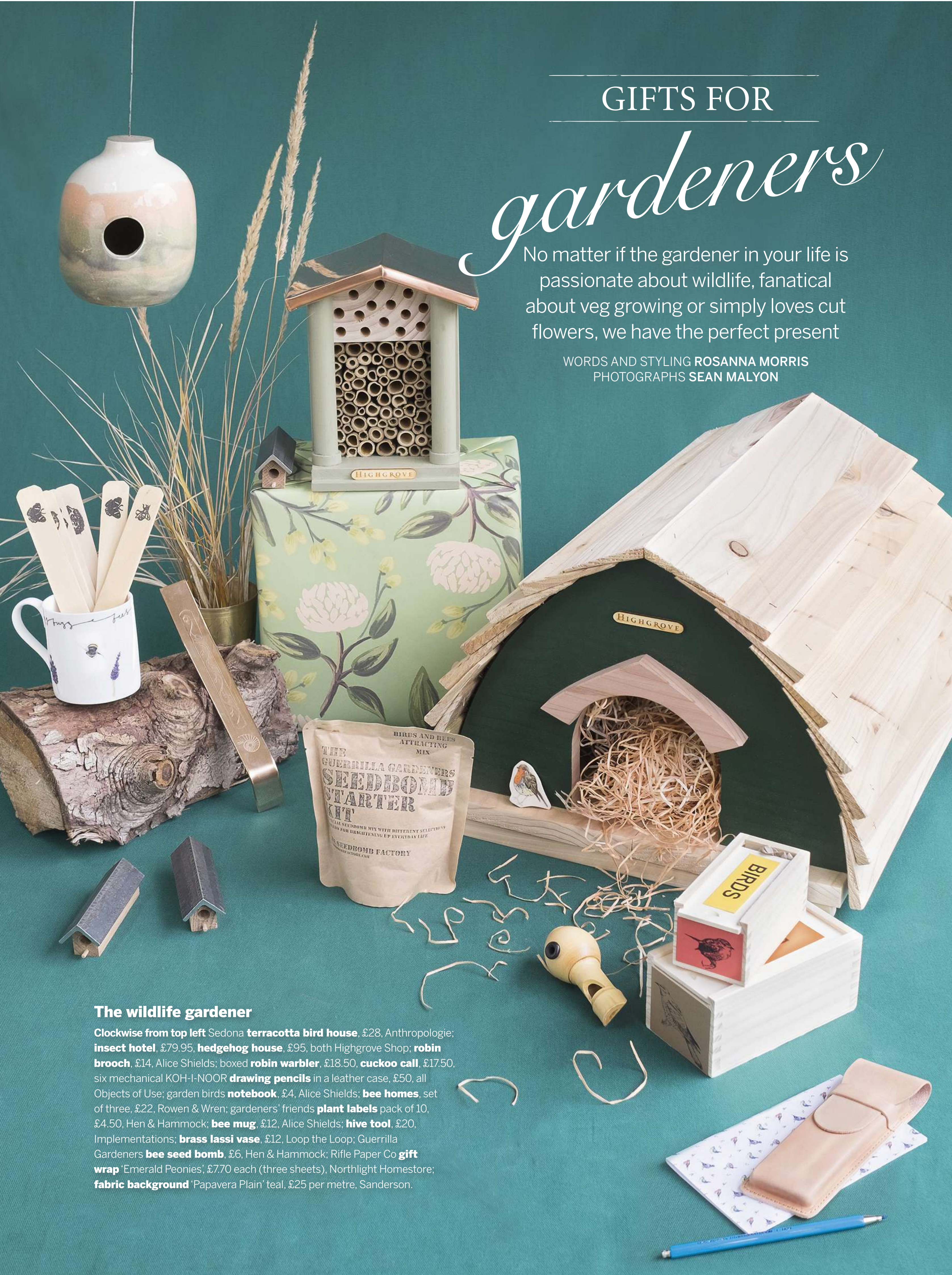
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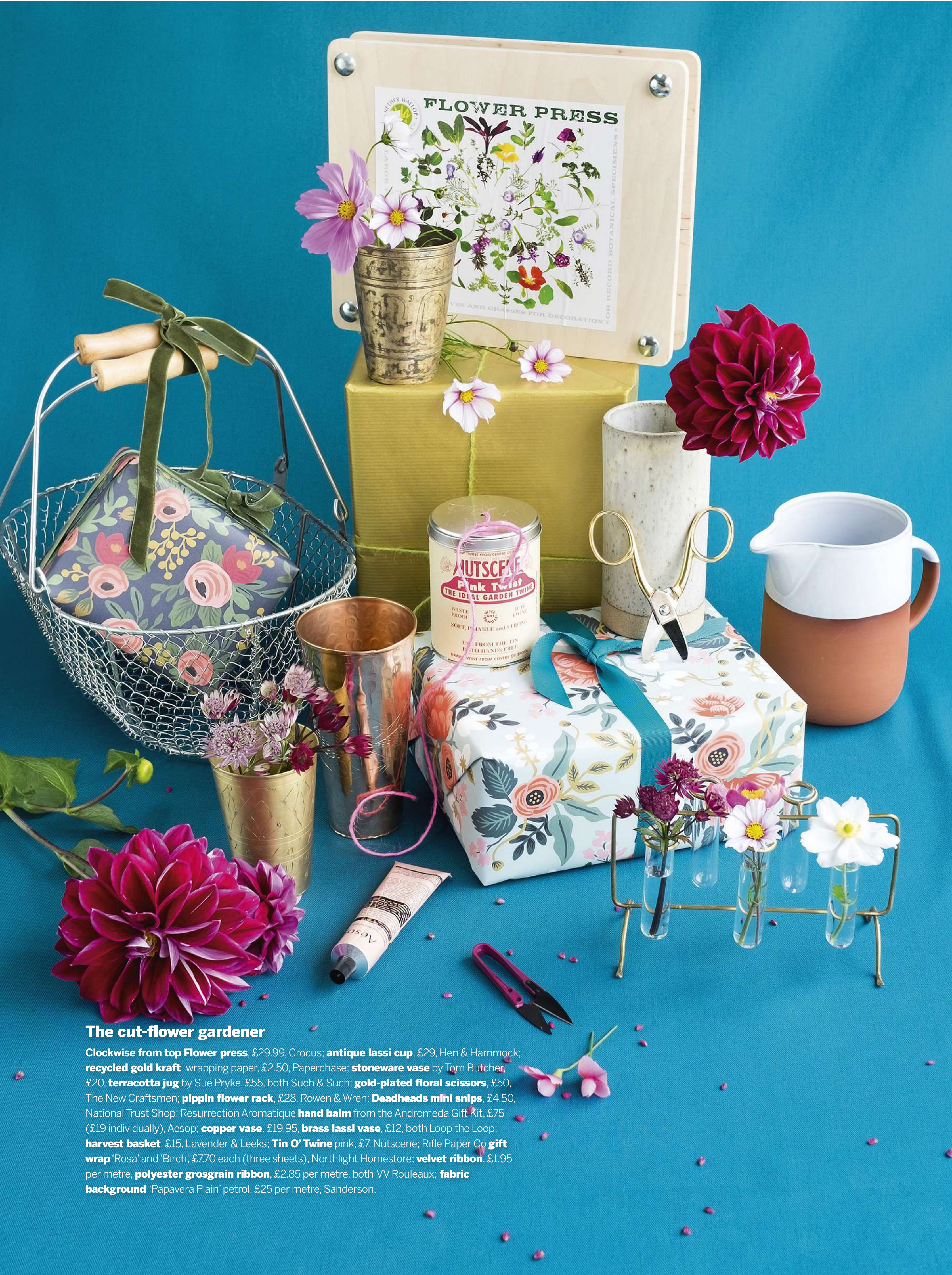
The wildlife gardener

Clockwise from top left Sedona **terracotta bird house**, £28, Anthropologie; **insect hotel**, £79.95, **hedgehog house**, £95, both Highgrove Shop; **robin brooch**, £14, Alice Shields; boxed **robin warbler**, £18.50, **cuckoo call**, £17.50, six mechanical KOH-I-NOOR **drawing pencils** in a leather case, £50, all Objects of Use; garden birds **notebook**, £4, Alice Shields; **bee homes**, set of three, £22, Rowen & Wren; gardeners' friends **plant labels** pack of 10, £4.50, Hen & Hammock; **bee mug**, £12, Alice Shields; **hive tool**, £20, Implementations; **brass lassi vase**, £12, Loop the Loop; Guerrilla Gardeners **bee seed bomb**, £6, Hen & Hammock; Rifle Paper Co **gift wrap** 'Emerald Peonies', £7.70 each (three sheets), Northlight Homestore; **fabric background** 'Papavera Plain' teal, £25 per metre, Sanderson.

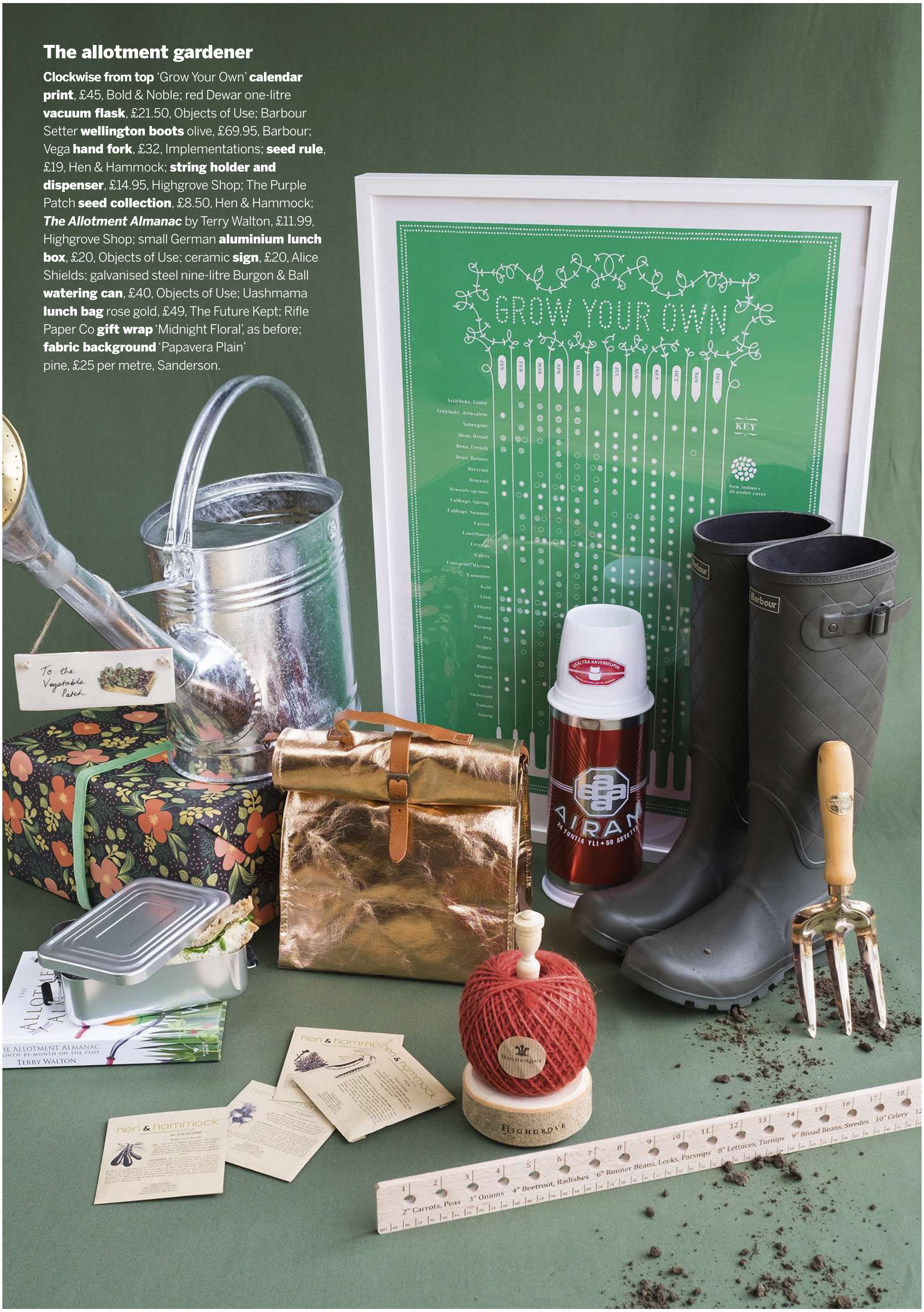


The cut-flower gardener

Clockwise from top Flower press, £29.99, Crocus; **antique lassi cup**, £29, Hen & Hammock; **recycled gold kraft** wrapping paper, £2.50, Paperchase; **stoneware vase** by Tom Butcher, £20, **terracotta jug** by Sue Pryke, £55, both Such & Such; **gold-plated floral scissors**, £50, The New Craftsmen; **pippin flower rack**, £28, Rowen & Wren; **Deadheads mini snips**, £4.50, National Trust Shop; Resurrection Aromatique **hand balm** from the Andromeda Gift Kit, £75 (£19 individually), Aesop; **copper vase**, £19.95, **brass lassi vase**, £12, both Loop the Loop; **harvest basket**, £15, Lavender & Leeks; **Tin O' Twine** pink, £7, Nutscene; Rifle Paper Co **gift wrap** 'Rosa' and 'Birch', £7.70 each (three sheets), Northlight Homestore; **velvet ribbon**, £1.95 per metre, **polyester grosgrain ribbon**, £2.85 per metre, both VV Rouleaux; **fabric background** 'Papavera Plain' petrol, £25 per metre, Sanderson.

The allotment gardener

Clockwise from top 'Grow Your Own' **calendar print**, £45, Bold & Noble; red Dewar one-litre **vacuum flask**, £21.50, Objects of Use; Barbour Setter **wellington boots** olive, £69.95, Barbour; Vega **hand fork**, £32, Implementations; **seed rule**, £19, Hen & Hammock; **string holder and dispenser**, £14.95, Highgrove Shop; The Purple Patch **seed collection**, £8.50, Hen & Hammock; ***The Allotment Almanac*** by Terry Walton, £11.99, Highgrove Shop; small German **aluminium lunch box**, £20, Objects of Use; ceramic **sign**, £20, Alice Shields; galvanised steel nine-litre Burgon & Ball **watering can**, £40, Objects of Use; Uashmama **lunch bag** rose gold, £49, The Future Kept; Rifle Paper Co **gift wrap** 'Midnight Floral', as before; **fabric background** 'Papavera Plain' pine, £25 per metre, Sanderson.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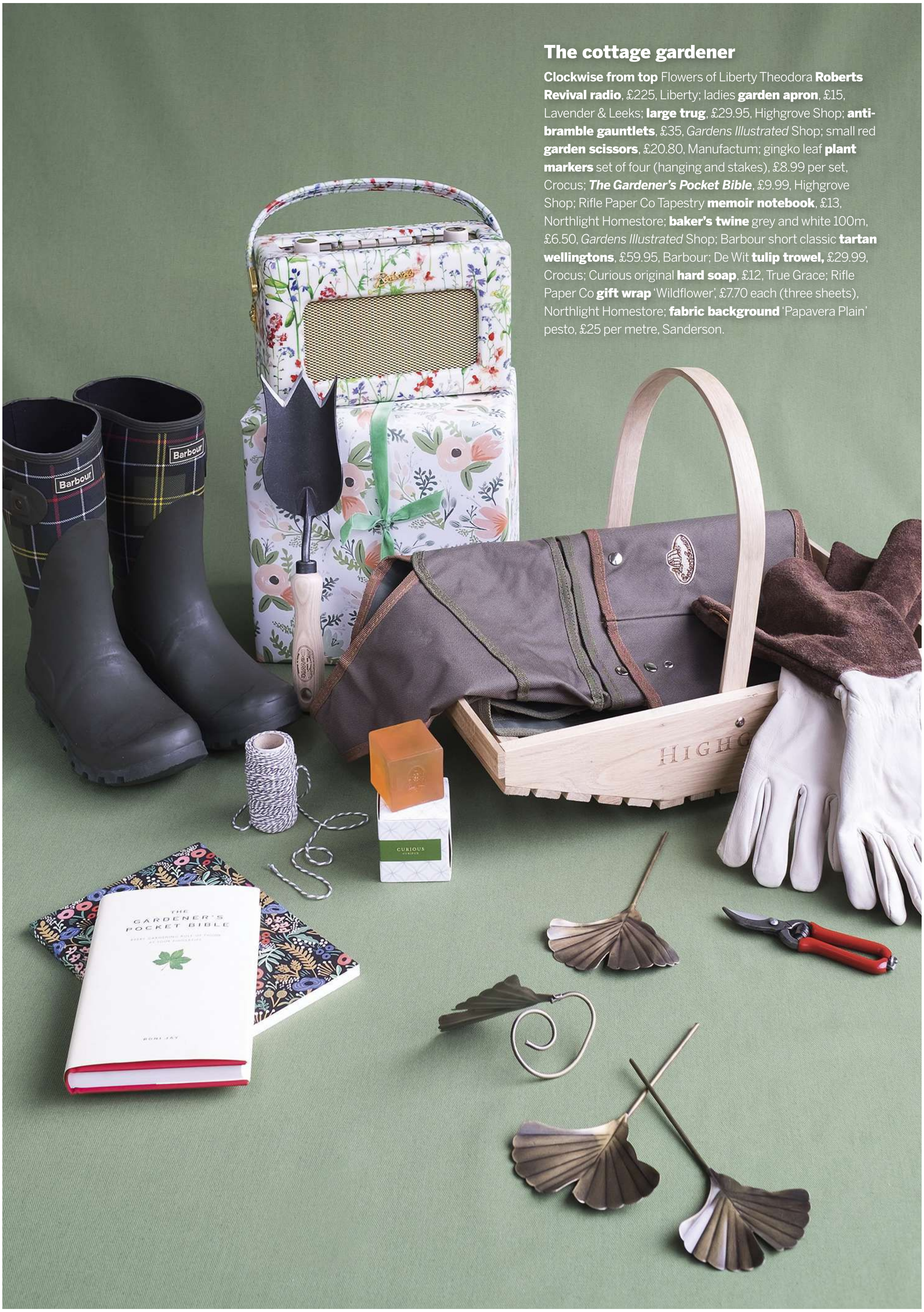
2" Carrots, Peas 3" Onions 4" Beetroot, Radishes 6" Runner Beans, Leeks, Parsnips 8" Lettuces, Turnips 9" Broad Beans, Swedes 10" Celery

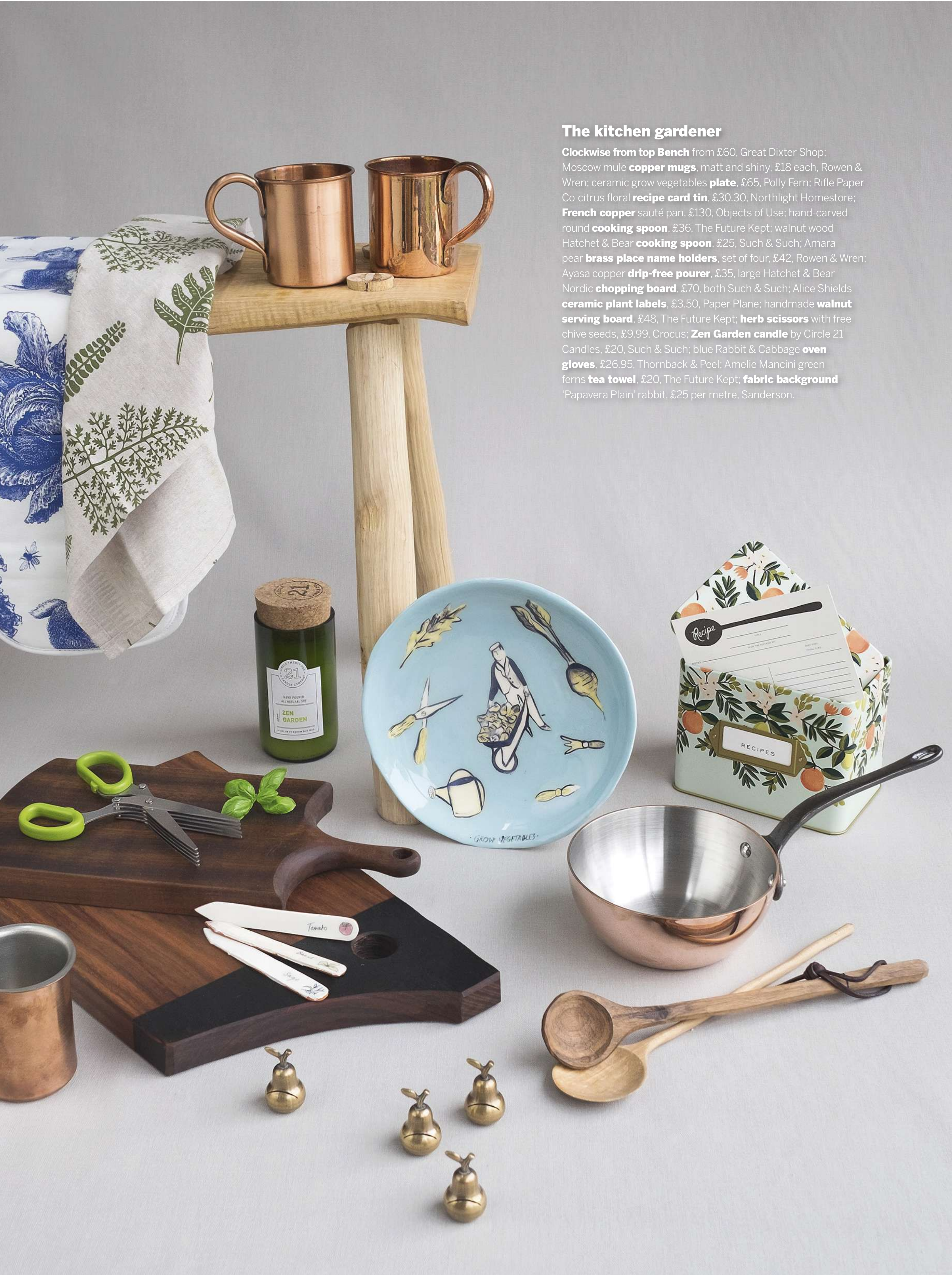


The cottage gardener

Clockwise from top Flowers of Liberty Theodora **Roberts Revival radio**, £225, Liberty; ladies **garden apron**, £15, Lavender & Leeks; **large trug**, £29.95, Highgrove Shop; **anti-bramble gauntlets**, £35, *Gardens Illustrated* Shop; small red **garden scissors**, £20.80, Manufactum; gingko leaf **plant markers** set of four (hanging and stakes), £8.99 per set, Crocus; ***The Gardener's Pocket Bible***, £9.99, Highgrove Shop; Rifle Paper Co Tapestry **memoir notebook**, £13, Northlight Homestore; **baker's twine** grey and white 100m, £6.50, *Gardens Illustrated* Shop; Barbour short classic **tartan wellingtons**, £59.95, Barbour; De Wit **tulip trowel,** £29.99, Crocus; Curious original **hard soap**, £12, True Grace; Rifle Paper Co **gift wrap** 'Wildflower', £7.70 each (three sheets), Northlight Homestore; **fabric background** 'Papavera Plain' pesto, £25 per metre, Sanderson.

The kitchen gardener

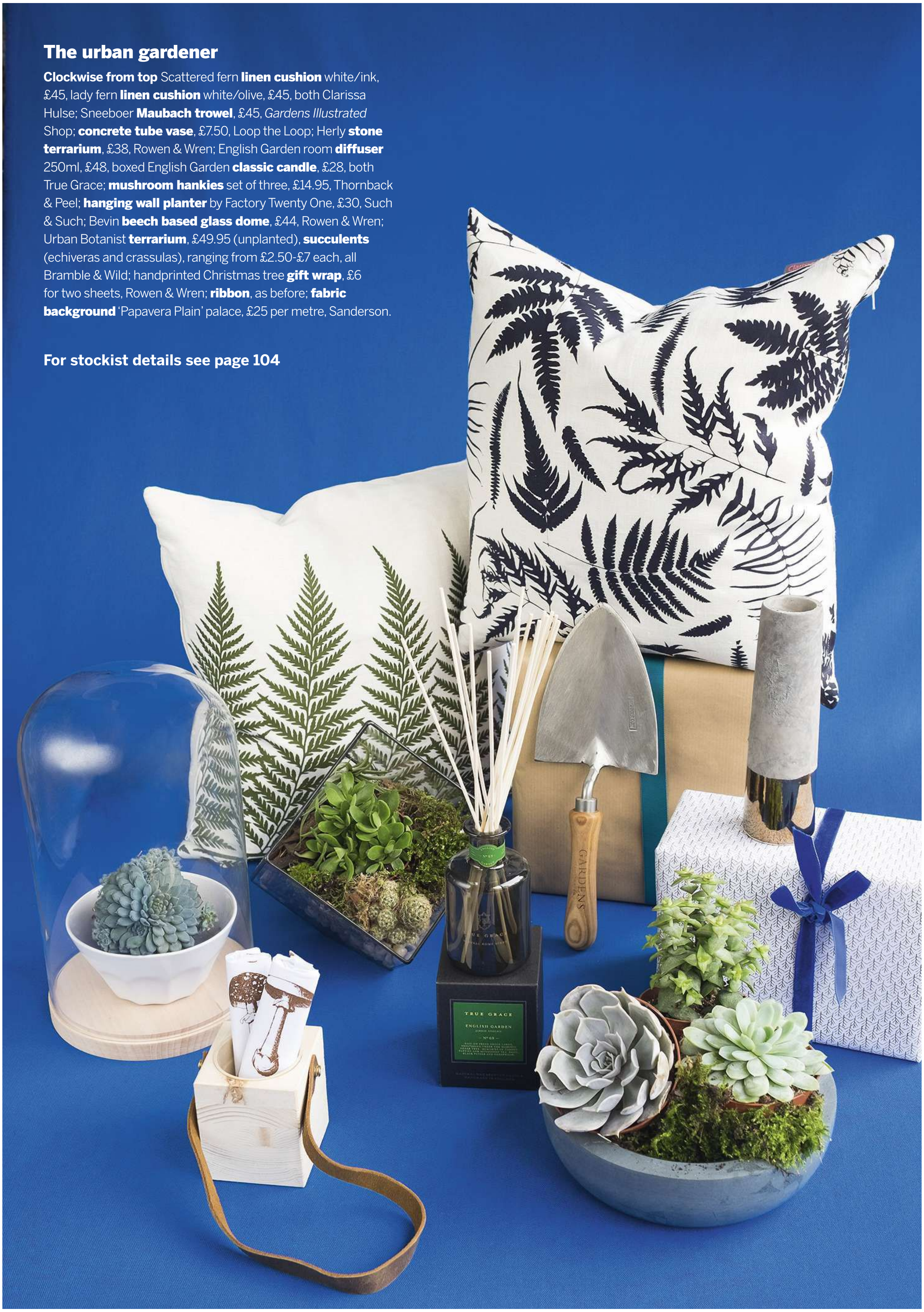
Clockwise from top Bench from £60, Great Dixter Shop; Moscow mule **copper mugs**, matt and shiny, £18 each, Rowen & Wren; ceramic grow vegetables **plate**, £65, Polly Fern; Rifle Paper Co citrus floral **recipe card tin**, £30.30, Northlight Homestore; **French copper** sauté pan, £130, Objects of Use; hand-carved round **cooking spoon**, £36, The Future Kept; walnut wood Hatchet & Bear **cooking spoon**, £25, Such & Such; Amara pear **brass place name holders**, set of four, £42, Rowen & Wren; Ayasa copper **drip-free pourer**, £35, large Hatchet & Bear Nordic **chopping board**, £70, both Such & Such; Alice Shields **ceramic plant labels**, £3.50, Paper Plane; handmade **walnut serving board**, £48, The Future Kept; **herb scissors** with free chive seeds, £9.99, Crocus; **Zen Garden candle** by Circle 21 Candles, £20, Such & Such; blue Rabbit & Cabbage **oven gloves**, £26.95, Thornback & Peel; Amelie Mancini green ferns **tea towel**, £20, The Future Kept; **fabric background** 'Papavera Plain' rabbit, £25 per metre, Sanderson.



The urban gardener

Clockwise from top Scattered fern **linen cushion** white/ink, £45, lady fern **linen cushion** white/olive, £45, both Clarissa Hulse; Sneeboer **Maubach trowel**, £45, *Gardens Illustrated* Shop; **concrete tube vase**, £7.50, Loop the Loop; Herly **stone terrarium**, £38, Rowen & Wren; English Garden room **diffuser** 250ml, £48, boxed English Garden **classic candle**, £28, both True Grace; **mushroom hankies** set of three, £14.95, Thornback & Peel; **hanging wall planter** by Factory Twenty One, £30, Such & Such; Bevin **beech based glass dome**, £44, Rowen & Wren; Urban Botanist **terrarium**, £49.95 (unplanted), **succulents** (echiveras and crassulas), ranging from £2.50-£7 each, all Bramble & Wild; handprinted Christmas tree **gift wrap**, £6 for two sheets, Rowen & Wren; **ribbon**, as before; **fabric background** 'Papavera Plain' palace, £25 per metre, Sanderson.

For stockist details see page 104



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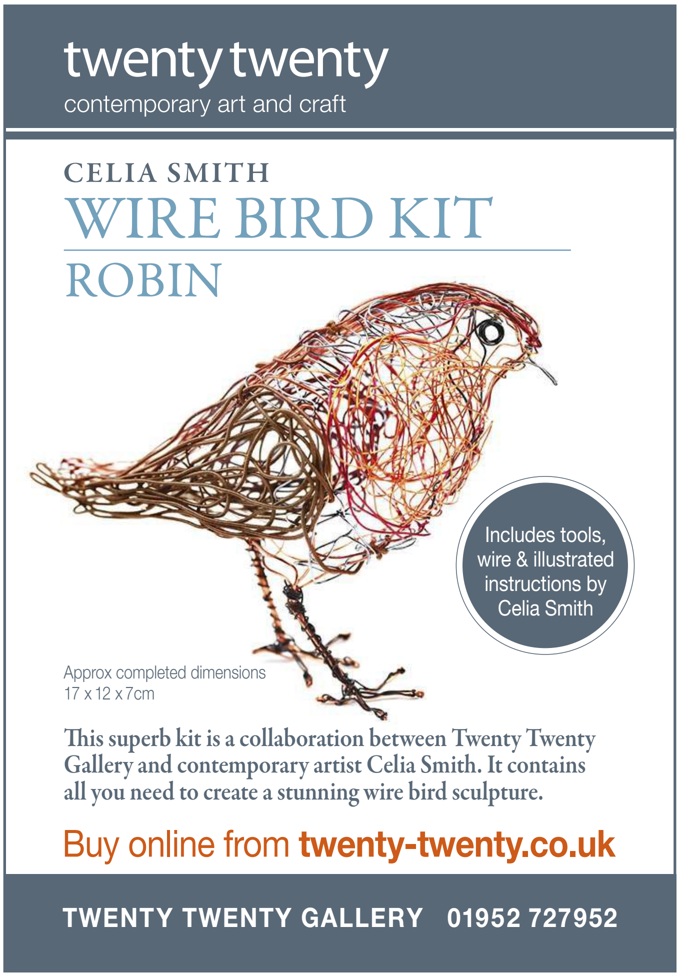
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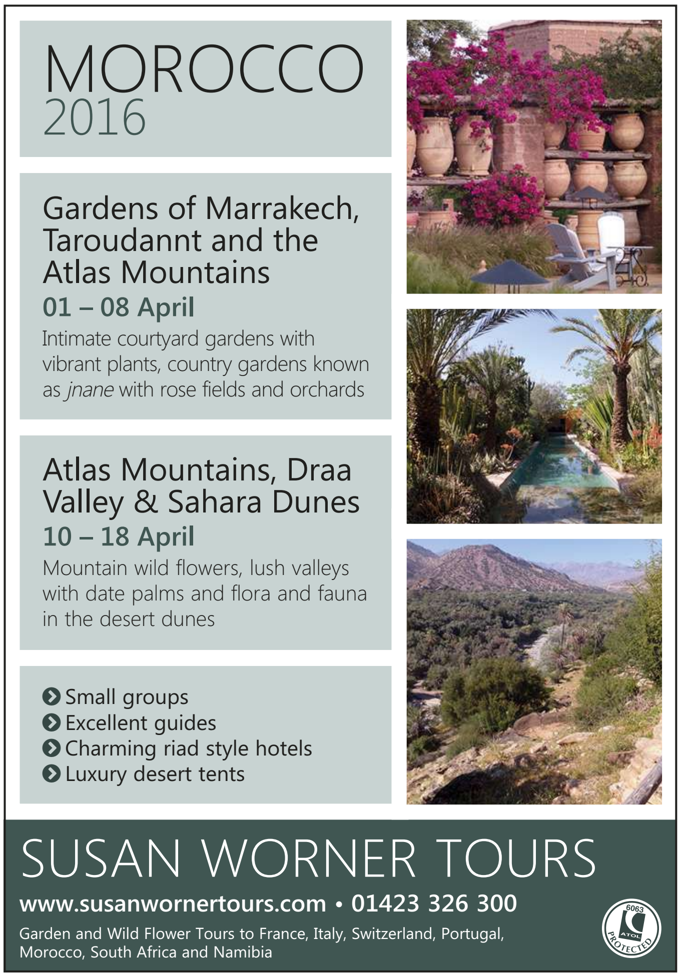
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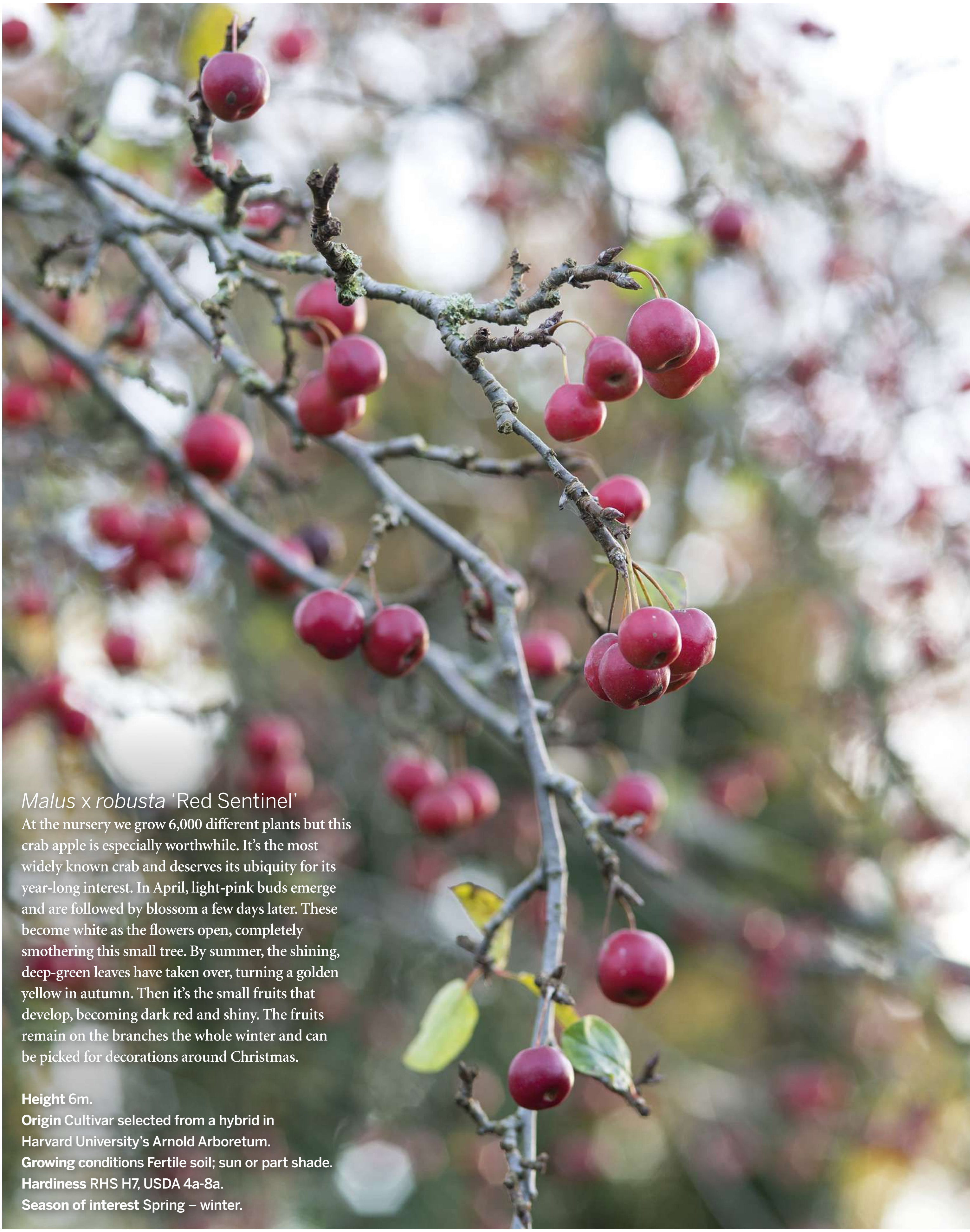
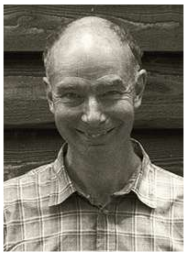


Malus x *robusta* ‘Red Sentinel’

At the nursery we grow 6,000 different plants but this crab apple is especially worthwhile. It’s the most widely known crab and deserves its ubiquity for its year-long interest. In April, light-pink buds emerge and are followed by blossom a few days later. These become white as the flowers open, completely smothering this small tree. By summer, the shining, deep-green leaves have taken over, turning a golden yellow in autumn. Then it’s the small fruits that develop, becoming dark red and shiny. The fruits remain on the branches the whole winter and can be picked for decorations around Christmas.

Height 6m.
Origin Cultivar selected from a hybrid in Harvard University’s Arnold Arboretum.
Growing conditions Fertile soil; sun or part shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-8a.
Season of interest Spring – winter.



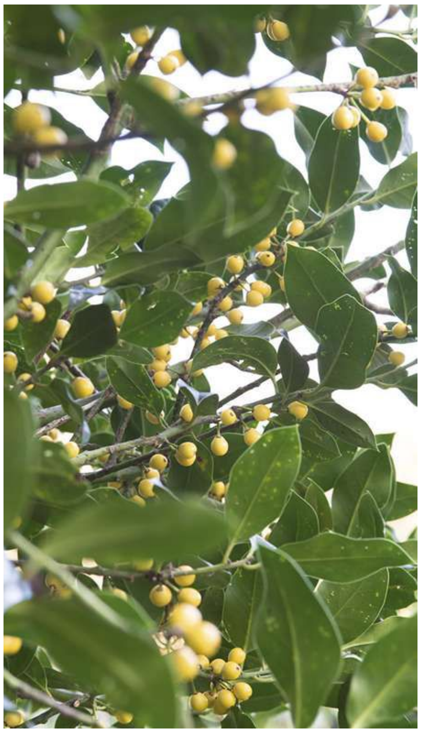
CHARLIE HOPKINSON

December plants

Hans ends his year-long series by choosing his favourite plants that offer interest and colour right the way through autumn and into winter

WORDS HANS KRAMER PHOTOGRAPHS MAAYKE DE RIDDER

Hans Kramer co-owns Kwekerij De Hessenhof in the Netherlands. hessenhof.nl



Ilex aquifolium 'Bacciflava'

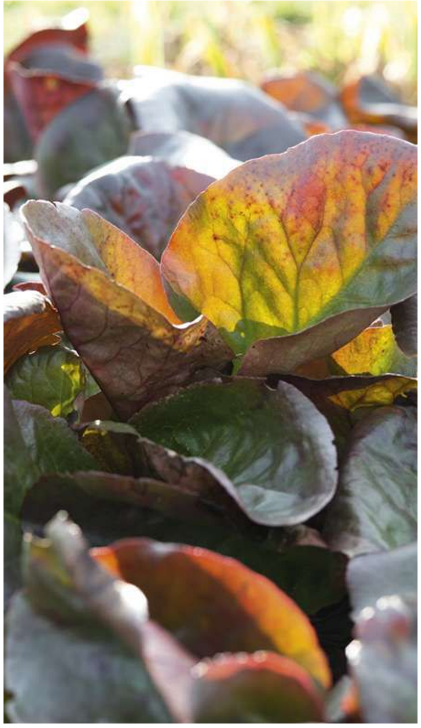
It's strange that native plants tend to be neglected in gardens, with little written about them. The very least you can say of this holly is that it has unusual yellow berries. The birds seem to prefer the red berries and leave the yellow ones until last. Just make sure this female holly is planted near a male counterpart to ensure fertilisation and a good crop of berries. But berries aside, this is a good garden plant too. Growth is dense and conical and you can even use it as a large hedge. Don't clip too tightly, otherwise you get hardly any berries.

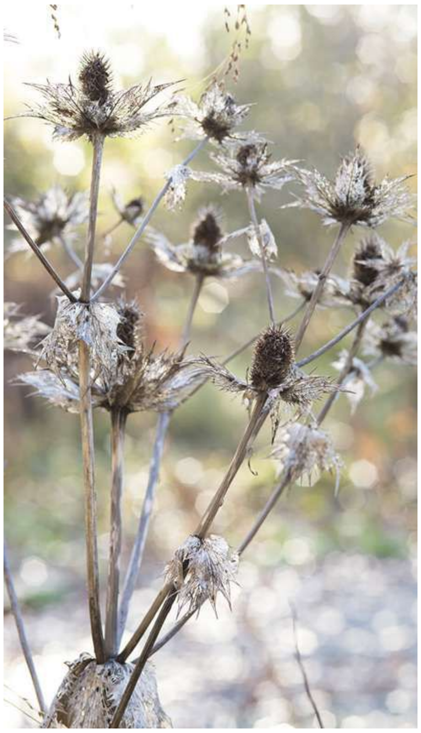
Height 10m.
Origin Europe and west Asia.
Growing conditions Most soils; sun or part shade.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Season of interest Autumn.

Bergenia 'Eroica'

Even after a hard frost the distinguished leaves of this decorative bergenia stay upright. At this time of the year they adopt a strong brown-purple colour with striking red undersides, which is even more pronounced in midwinter. These leaves are excellent for cutting and last for many weeks in water. Without doubt this is my favourite bergenia, bred by one of my great horticulture heroes, Ernst Pagels. It's also a truly spectacular plant in spring, when its violet-red flowers stand on thick, dark stems above those leaves undamaged by winter.

Height 35cm.
Origin Siberia, Himalayas.
Growing conditions Any soil; sun or part shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-7b.
Season of interest Spring and winter.

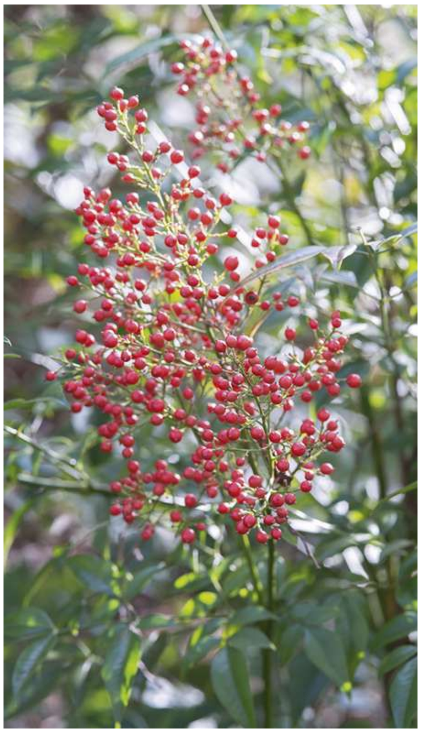




Eryngium giganteum

I got this plant from a seed exchange where it was labelled *Eryngium caucasicum*, which it is not. But I'm still not sure if this is a true *E. giganteum* because our form isn't truly biennial, often making new winter rosettes and flowers the following year. These rosettes don't really look like a thistle, but in early summer stiff stems with marbled, prickly foliage give rise to many grey cones with conspicuous silver-grey, thistle-like bracts. The strong stems stay upright in winter giving a nice outline. Popular with birds who like to feed on the seedheads.

Height 1m.
Origin Caucasus.
Growing conditions Free-draining, alkaline soil; sun.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Season of interest Summer – winter.



Nandina domestica 'Richmond'

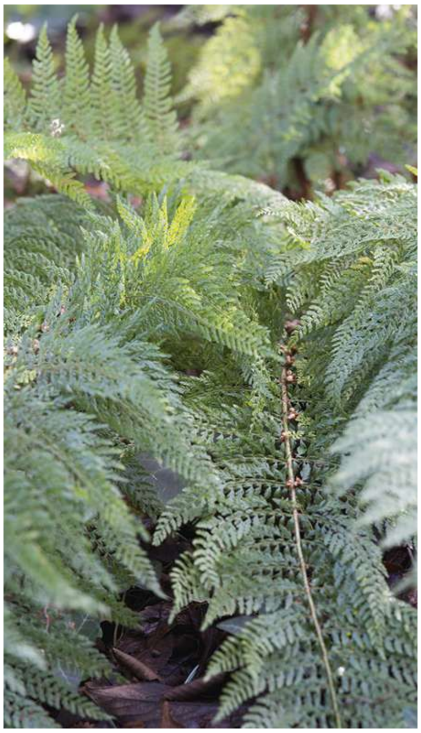
It's hard to believe that this evergreen shrub is from the *Berberis* genus – but without the spines. The small flowers, with yellow anthers are easily overlooked in early summer. Until then you are simply satisfied with the leathery bluish green leaves, which are coppery red when young. But in autumn this shrub becomes spectacular with bright-red leaves and panicles so full of red berries that the branches bend over. This really is one of the best fruited shrubs I know, and it even grows in heavy shade.

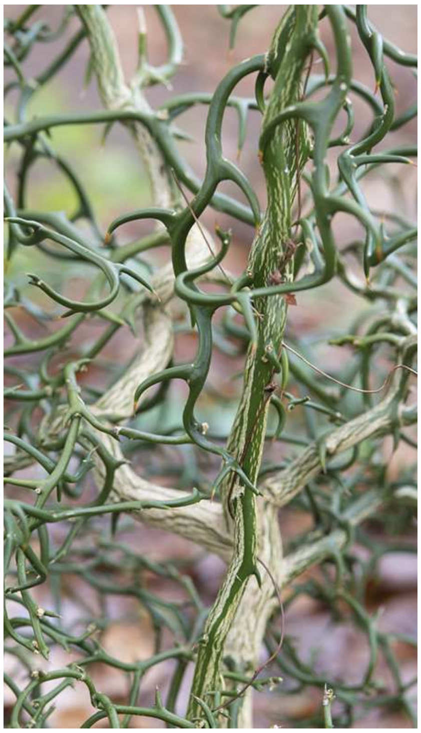
Height 2m.
Origin Japan and China.
Growing conditions Humus-rich soil; sun or full shade.
Hardiness RHS H6.
Season of interest Autumn – winter.

Polystichum setiferum 'Foliosum Superbum Kaye'

I bought this luxuriant fern in 1985 at the Lancashire nursery of Reginald Kaye. The fact that it's still growing strong is perhaps the most admirable thing about this fern: plant it and it will stay forever. It's a particularly fine form of the Foliosum Group and has extra leafy pinnules that often overlap to give a soft, almost woolly appearance. It is completely evergreen and tolerates quite dry places in shade. In a good soil that's not too dry, the growth is really lush – almost one metre in diameter.

Height 80cm.
Origin Europe.
Growing conditions Part shade to full shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.
Season of interest Year round.





Citrus trifoliata 'Flying Dragon'

This member of the citrus family is also called Japanese bitter orange – and indeed the yellow fruits are extremely sour and inedible. They do, however, smell lovely; put a few in a bowl in the kitchen and the whole place fills with a sweet perfume. I have had this curious, contorted form since it was a young plant and haven't had any fruits yet, but I'm told they generally remain hanging between the twisted stems into winter. Here it is completely hardy, withstanding -18°C. And I haven't even mentioned the fragrant white flowers in spring…

Height 2.5m.
Origin North China, Korea.
Growing conditions Well-drained soil, tending towards acidic; sun.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 6a-10b.
Season of interest Spring and winter.

Tips for autumn and winter

Five ideas to make the quieter winter months in the garden just as fulfilling and useful as the rest of the year.

1 **Do more garden work.** As a nurseryman I know all too well that time is short in spring and it's exactly the same for any gardener at home. But in September we can breathe again and late autumn is the perfect time to reorganise herbaceous borders – while any successes or failures are still fresh in your memory, and perennials can be divided and replanted.

Rake leaves and compost for a year to use as mulch.

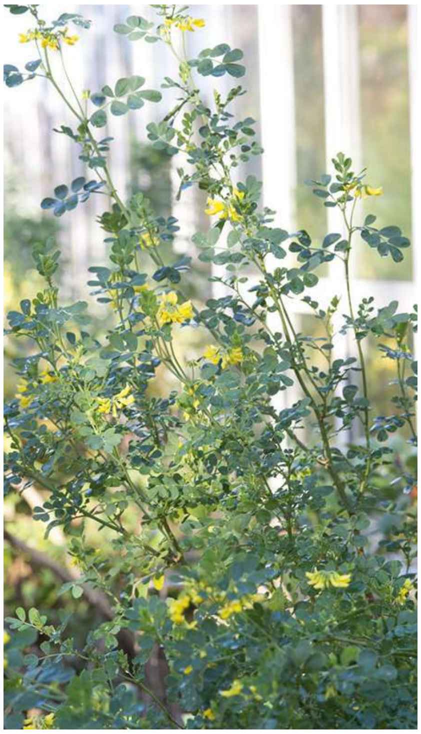
ABIGAIL REX / GAP PHOTOS

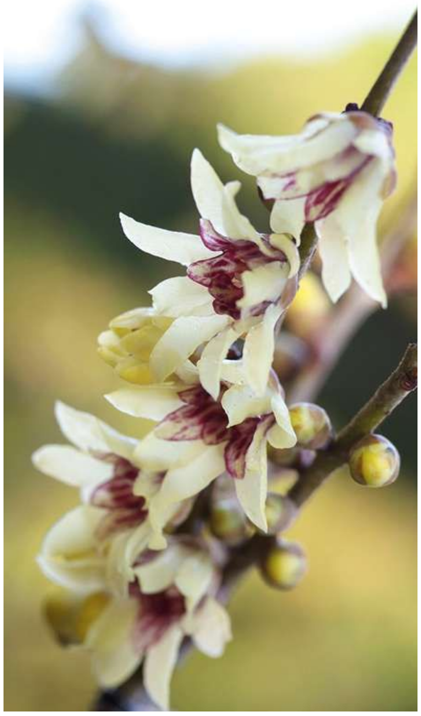
2 **Visit a nurseries in summer and autumn.** Rather than leave it until spring and fight the crowds browsing the barely emerging plants with labels bigger than them, go to a nursery later in the year. Real working nurseries have full stock from July to August onwards. With plants in full leaf or flower you can choose exactly the colour and form of plant you want.

Coronilla valentina subsp. *glauca*

It was nurseryman Bob Brown who told me that these vetch-like Mediterranean shrubs were so useful. I'd assumed they weren't hardy, but on our south-facing wall, in our poor, sandy soil, it is the star of winter. From November onwards it produces clusters of pea-like flowers in golden yellow. In a mild winter it keeps on flowering, often right through to May. In a really cold winter, the bluish-grey evergreen leaves fall off, and occasionally the spidery twigs die down, but it always re-sprouts. Look out for the cultivar 'Citrina' with lemon-yellow flowers.

Height 90cm.
Origin Mediterranean.
Growing conditions Well-drained soil in a sheltered position; sun.
Hardiness RHS H5.
Season of interest Summer – late autumn.





Chimonanthus praecox

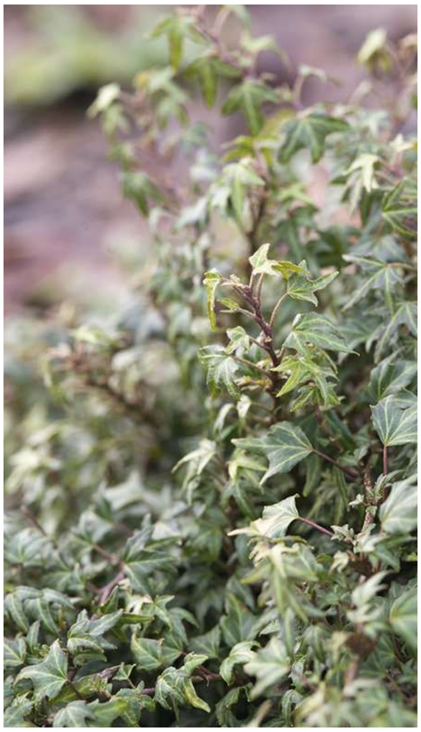
Wintersweet is one of the most fragrant shrubs there is. It flowers in the middle of winter, normally well before the witch hazels emerge. The pale, waxy-yellow flowers with their purplish centre, can be partially hidden by the old foliage that hasn't yet fallen, which makes for a striking yellow and green combination. But with a long flowering period you can also admire the flowers in their full glory on bare stems when all the leaves have been shed. Do remember to allow enough space when planting, because this shrub can eventually grow quite big.

Height 4m.
Origin China.
Growing conditions Well-drained soil; sun or part shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 6a-9b.
Season of interest Winter.

Hedera helix 'Dyinnii'

This must be the smallest ivy in the world, found in 2005 by Dutch nurseryman Cees van Ostaayen as a mutant of the already small *Hedera* 'Needle Point'. The very small, sharply pointed, deeply cut leaves on dense-growing, twiggy stems make a nice rounded dome. They are often a good talking point when I'm selling at a plant fair, because not many people recognise it as an ivy. Good in a pot but also good for the rock garden or even as an edging plant. Very occasionally you have to remove some bigger upright-growing shoots.

Height 25cm.
Origin Europe.
Growing conditions Humus-rich soil; shade or part shade.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Season of interest Year round.



3 **If you plant perennials** in autumn, it's good practice to plant them a little bit deeper than you normally would – an extra 2-3cm should be enough. This helps to provide more protection from frosts. With plants that are especially vulnerable, such as *Salvia guaranitica* or *Fuchsia magellanica*, I plant even deeper – an extra 10cm or so.

Visit gardens in winter to see how plants fare.

HIGHGROVE / A. BUTLER. ARCHITECT LOCAL MASON ANTHONY KECK / GAP PHOTOS

4 **Only rake off leaves from lawns**, paths and driveways, and the rockery. Leave leaves on borders and shrub plantings to break down where they are. I compost the collected leaves for a year then use as a thin layer of mulch over my borders to prevent the fresh fallen leaves from blowing away. It gives a boost to your soil's nutrients and looks attractive.

5 **Visit gardens in the middle of winter,** especially after a heavy storm. Notice which perennials are still standing upright and which aren't. Consider what this might mean for any ideas you've had on future planting. A border packed with plants that retain a nice winter silhouette is better than one that is either finished or has collapsed before winter.

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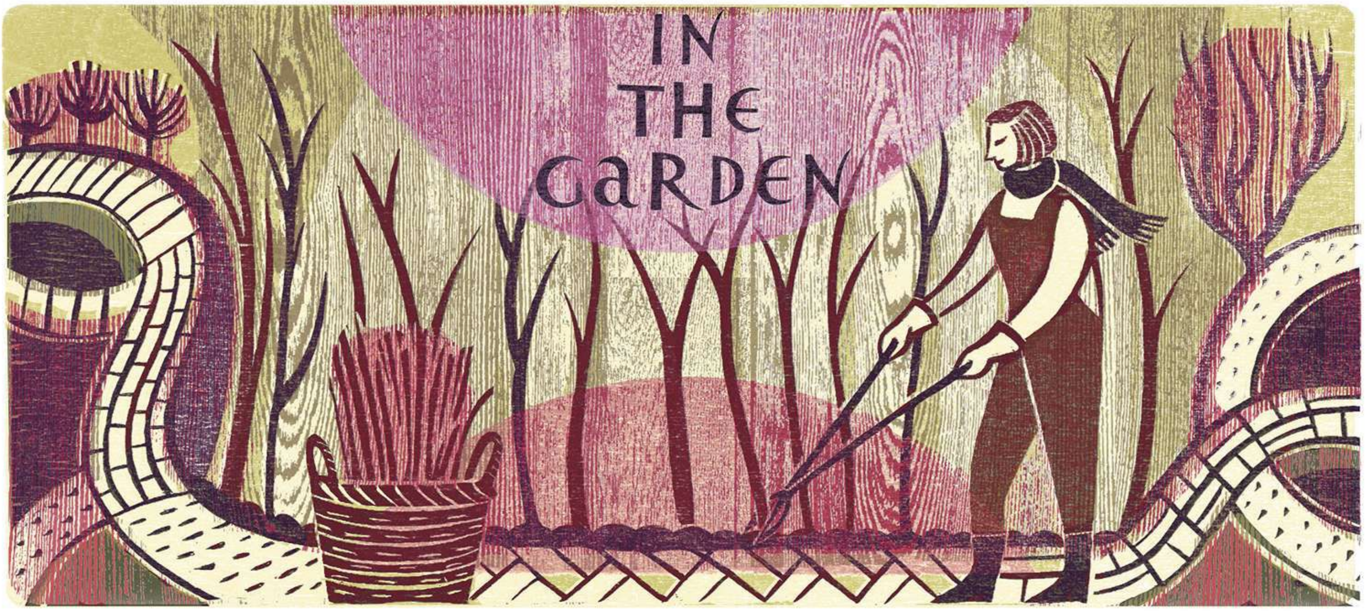

Jojo takes stock of the allotment year and vows that next time around the weeds will be vanquished and the plot better tended

WORDS **JOJO TULLOH** ILLUSTRATIONS **SARAH YOUNG**

Winter is a good time to think about what you have learned this year in your own and other people's gardens. My allotment has a very specific aesthetic: a bit ramshackle, sometimes a little overgrown. It is productive enough but I always strive to make it better and to that end I sketch ambitious plans in my notebook, sitting by a fire rather than out in the mud and cold. Psychologically, I prefer winter to autumn, when I suffer my own allotment version of SAD (seasonal affective disorder). Each September I am plunged into gloom, the good intentions of last spring behind me; bindweed has taken hold, weaving a string of lantern-like seedheads through the branches of our 'Spartan' apple tree, while couch grass is knotting itself around the roots of the currant bushes, and the leaves of the newly planted gooseberry bushes are spotted grey with mildew. I berate myself for my sloppy gardening and, after picking a few armfuls of chard, late courgette flowers and salad, I usually run away without doing much. Far better is a crisp winter day when the plants have died back and I can see the skeleton of my plot start to emerge once again.

Gardening in isolation means bad habits can creep up on you. To stimulate better practice and jolt myself out of complacency, I visit other urban gardens. On a blisteringly hot day last July I cycled to a market garden in Dagenham where Alice Holden – profiled on last month's Gardening Talent page [issue 227, page 31] – has transformed the glasshouses and growing spaces of a neglected council nursery into a one-and-a-half-acre organic farm. Alice managed a 100-acre farm in Wales before taking on the Dagenham Starter Farm in 2012. It was funded for two years through lottery money secured by Growing Communities, a not-for-profit social enterprise based in east London that runs a veg box scheme and sponsors apprentice growers. Now the farm has to pay its way so Alice and her team of volunteers supply restaurants and residents with fresh produce.

In dire need of regeneration, Dagenham seemed to wilt in the heat but not so the farm; watered with stored rainwater, cucumbers, tomatoes and courgettes clambered through one greenhouse, while glossy beds of chard created a red and emerald carpet. In September I returned and went home with bags of newly harvested mixed leaves (pak choi, mustard, chard, rocket, frilly lettuce and sorrel), multicoloured heritage tomatoes, swags of sunflowers and cosmos and, most importantly, a feeling that with a little more dedication I too could make a garden such as this. **growingcommunities.org**

WHAT TO DO NOW

- Read. Take advantage of inclement days and refresh your knowledge. Recap on things you think you know (sowing and cultivation, for example) and gain inspiration for new directions in the coming year – I'm planning to plant a Sechuan pepper plant (*Zanthoxylum schinifolium*).
- Use dry days to lay down paths. Whether you like herringboned bricks, woodchip, cockle shells or gravel, this is an ideal time to add some structure. Mulch fruit trees and bushes with compost or muck and, if you are at war with bindweed, consider using a thick weed suppressant fabric, such as Mypex, around perennials. Keep an eye on brassicas and chicories and pull off any rotting or yellowing leaves, separate leaves back and pick off any slugs feasting on the hearts. If you happen to be near the sea, collect seaweed from the beach and thickly cover your asparagus beds. Cut sticks for peas and beans while trees are leafless. On fine days, prune blackcurrants and gooseberries and thin out raspberries. Order some leek seeds for a January sowing. I like the look of the very hardy 'Bleu de Solaise' blue winter leek. Around £2 for 400 seeds from **realseeds.co.uk**

IN THE
KITCHEN

While otherwise delicious, when it comes to colour, winter cooking can verge on dingy. All those braises and stews mean brown is often in the ascendant. Import a little zing by using the viridifloric essence of herbs and spinach to tint sauces, soups and, in this case, aioli (garlic mayonnaise) a vivid green. Make a green oil by whizzing together 50-75g of parsley (later on, wild garlic and nettles work a treat, as do fennel tops) and 100ml of extra virgin olive oil in a food processor. When the mixture is smooth, push it through a sieve and you will have a bright green oil with which to dye your aioli. Crush two peeled cloves of garlic in a pestle and place in a liquidiser with two egg yolks. Beat the yolks and garlic with a teaspoon of salt and a teaspoon of white pepper. Pour in the oil (150ml extra virgin olive oil including the green oil) in a thin stream, adding a little boiled then cooled warm water if it starts to get too thick, whisk in the juice of one lemon and then add 150ml of sunflower oil, again in a thin stream. Store in the fridge, covered until needed.

Just as green is in short supply at this time of year so is crunch. I keep a jar or two of sprouting seeds on the windowsill. It's a fun thing to do with children and the sprouts themselves are bursting with the kind of goodness you can do with during the darker months. Eat them raw in winter slaws of shredded cabbage, beetroot, red onion, coriander and chickpeas, add them to sandwiches or cook them in stir fries. I have a special sprouting jar with a mesh top but you can use an ordinary jam jar and some coarse cloth or fabric held down with an elastic band. Take a scrupulously clean jam jar, put two tablespoons of seeds (you can use mung beans, radish, chickpeas, alfalfa or sunflower seeds) in the jar and cover with water. Fix the cloth on and leave to soak. Place your jar in a corner of the kitchen out of direct sunlight. The next morning drain off the water through the mesh/fabric. That way you don't lose seeds. Rinse with cold water and drain again. The better you look after your sprouts the nicer they will be. Try not to leave any water in the jar. Do this every morning and evening and on the fourth or fifth day, when your sprouts are growing, move them into the light to green up. Pull apart what you need. If you want you can float them in water to get rid of any hulls (the outside of the seed) and then drain and use. Try them with mashed avocado, a poached egg and toast for an admirably healthy start to the day. They keep well for a day or two in a ziplock plastic bag in the fridge. □

> Just as green is in short supply at this time of year so is crunch. I keep a jar or two of sprouting seeds on the windowsill

RECIPES

Cardoons

The food of the past doesn't often sound that appetising but now and then you come across a book with a surprisingly modern touch. Louis-Eustache Ude (1769-1846) was the original temperamental French chef. Apprenticed in the kitchens of Louis XVI, during his long career he worked for many rich and demanding patrons, beginning with Napoleon Bonaparte's mother. He achieved his immense fame as a chef in the kitchens of Crockford's, an opulent semi-legal gambling club in St James's Street, London. Ude had a reputation for vanity but his book, *The French Cook* (published 1813), is full of sound recipes and a great variety of vegetable dishes, such as the eminently eatable cauliflower with parmesan cheese.

One of his favourite winter vegetables was the cardoon. He remarks: 'It is not much relished in England, but in France it was held in the highest estimation.' Ude goes on to say that a dish of cardoons was always prepared by a new chef on trial, so see how you fare with this recipe.

Acidulate a bowl of water with the **juice of 1 lemon** and then, with a paring knife, peel away the fibrous rib and the spiky sides of a **bunch (around 900g) of cardoons**. Rub off any of the white fuzz with a clean tea towel and pop the stalks into the bowl. Bring a pan of salted water to the boil and drop in the cardoons, cook for 12 minutes or so, drain and allow to cool before slicing into 1cm or so thick chunks. Make a tomato sauce by sizzling **2 cloves chopped garlic** in a pan with **2tbsp olive oil**, pinch of **chilli flakes** and a **long strip of lemon peel**. If you have **fresh marjoram**, chop and add that. Pour in **2 tins tomatoes** and cook for about 15 minutes, breaking up the sauce with a wooden spoon before adding the cardoons and cooking for another 20 minutes.

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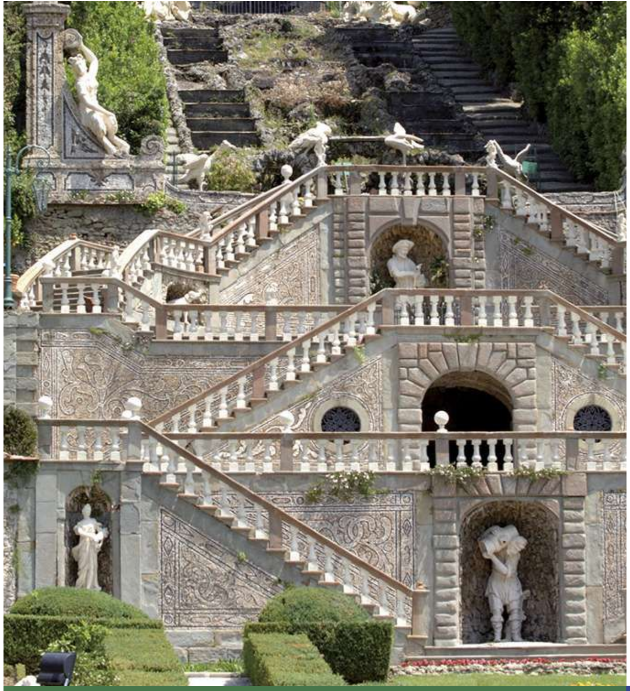

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iPad
9:41 AM
heritage garden
Tudor grandeur
Roger and Jackie Pietroni's garden at Ashley Farm, in the Welsh Marches, is designed to reflect the history of their 16th-century farmhouse
WORDS KATHERINE SWIFT PHOTOGRAPHS CAROLE DRAKE
In brief
PLANTING IDEAS • BEAUTIFUL GARDENS • EXPERT ADVICE
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Creating magic and intrigue in your garden BY SARAH PRICE
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Andy Nelson

Natural planting and a touch of romance are important to this freelance gardener who relishes the opportunities his work provides for constantly learning something new

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Earliest garden memory Popping fuchsia buds in my grandmother's garden as a child. Not a particularly green-fingered start.

Did you always want to work as a gardener? I studied psychology at university, but I chose gardening because I wanted a job that was both satisfying and physically demanding. Little did I know how much of the real joy of gardening lies in its ability to never stop surprising and challenging you no matter what your level of knowledge or experience.

Horticultural heroes Peter Dennis, a gardener I worked with when I was trying to get into gardening. He taught me so much in the five years we worked together and was always willing to share his experience. Also garden designer Mary Keen – I love the thought and the subtle dynamics she puts into her gardens, as well as the emphasis she places on having a narrative that runs throughout the garden.

Three worthwhile tips You need to be sensitive to both the garden and the local flora in the surrounding area – and also the client you are working for. It's important that you don't force unsuitable planting schemes on to a landscape or microclimate, or indeed a person. Secondly, make sure you are clean and tidy around the garden. It sounds obvious but the ability to make your movements untraceable at the end of the day makes the overall impression stronger. Thirdly, you need to have a thirst for knowledge; to want to understand the plants and practices you are dealing with. Not a day goes by when I don't actively learn something new – and that's a nice thing in any job.

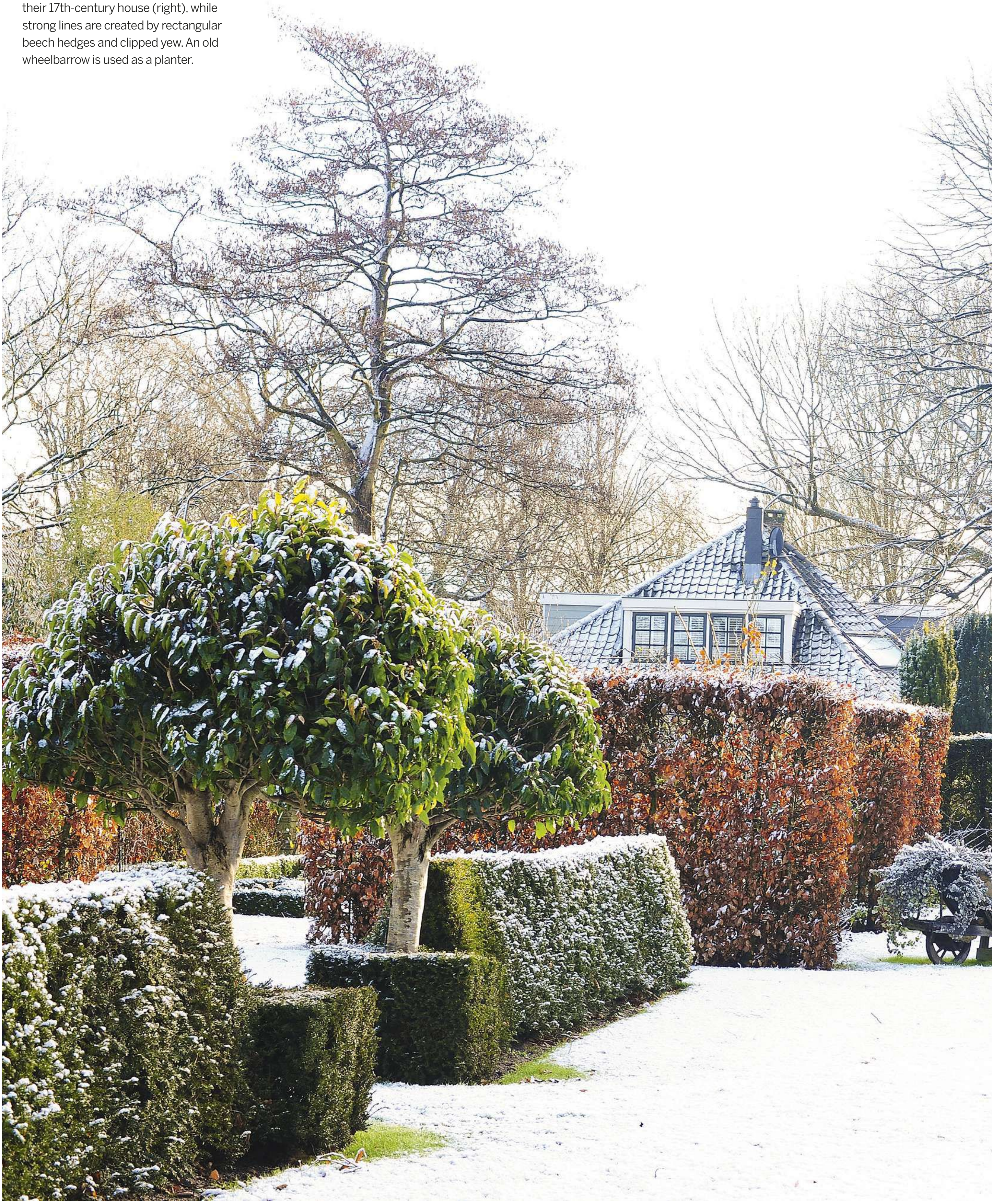
Most valuable training Being told to focus on the job in hand. It is so easy to walk around a garden and find a million and one jobs you need to do but that is ultimately a less productive way of working. If you finish one job at a time you'll find each one is completed to a much higher standard and you get much more work finished overall.

Favourite planting style I prefer a free-flowing, informal style, with natural planting schemes and a bit of intimacy and romance. Texture and smells are so important in helping to achieve this. It's good to be able to touch the plants and be led by the ebb and flow of the garden.

Favourite gardening blog I like the website thinkingardens.co.uk. It includes a host of varied blogs and articles linked to it. There are some great features on a wide range of horticultural subjects.

Contact a-nelson23@hotmail.co.uk

A century-old lime tree (*Tilia cordata*) towers over Ria and Jan's garden and their 17th-century house (right), while strong lines are created by rectangular beech hedges and clipped yew. An old wheelbarrow is used as a planter.



In brief

Name Die Langhuys.
What Garden with strong structure, inspired by the geometry of canals in the surrounding landscape.
Where Beemster, the Netherlands.
Size 5,000 square metres.
Soil Fertile, heavy clay.
Climate Maritime, with prevailing westerly winds.
Hardiness rating USDA 8a.

Strong lines

In the garden of Ria van Eijndhoven and Jan Schoutsen, ditches, paths, trees and hedges echo the linear patterns of the Dutch landscape in which it sits

WORDS SIMONE VAN HEININGEN PHOTOGRAPHS SIETSKE DE VRIES

If ever the sea decides to get its own back in the Netherlands, a third of the Dutch will have more than just wet feet. Ria van Eijndhoven and Jan Schoutsen, who for the past 40 years have lived in Die Langhuys (the Long House) that lies 3.5m below sea level, will be among the first of these.

Originally a school house, the traditional wooden building dates back to 1623, and was one of the first buildings constructed in the Beemster polder. This low-lying area of land north of Amsterdam was created by draining an inland sea. From 1607 to 1612, 42 windmills succeeded in turning it into 18,000 acres of productive land, parcelled out in a rectangular grid in accordance with classical and Renaissance principles. It is a masterpiece of creative planning. Today a UNESCO World Heritage Site, this flat, windy, engineered landscape that symbolises man's tenacity and ingenuity, continues to inspire Ria and Jan's garden.

In summer, when the plot is in full leaf and flower, it may not be immediately obvious. But in winter, when the garden shows its bare bones, a strong linear pattern of ditches, grass paths – "the width of Jan's ride-on mower" – and sight lines emerges that mirrors the mathematical division of the surrounding arable land: a system of squares forming a rectangle with the ideal dimensional ratio of 2:3.

Enclosed and criss-crossed by narrow canals, the garden is divided into various ▷

DIE·LANGHUYS

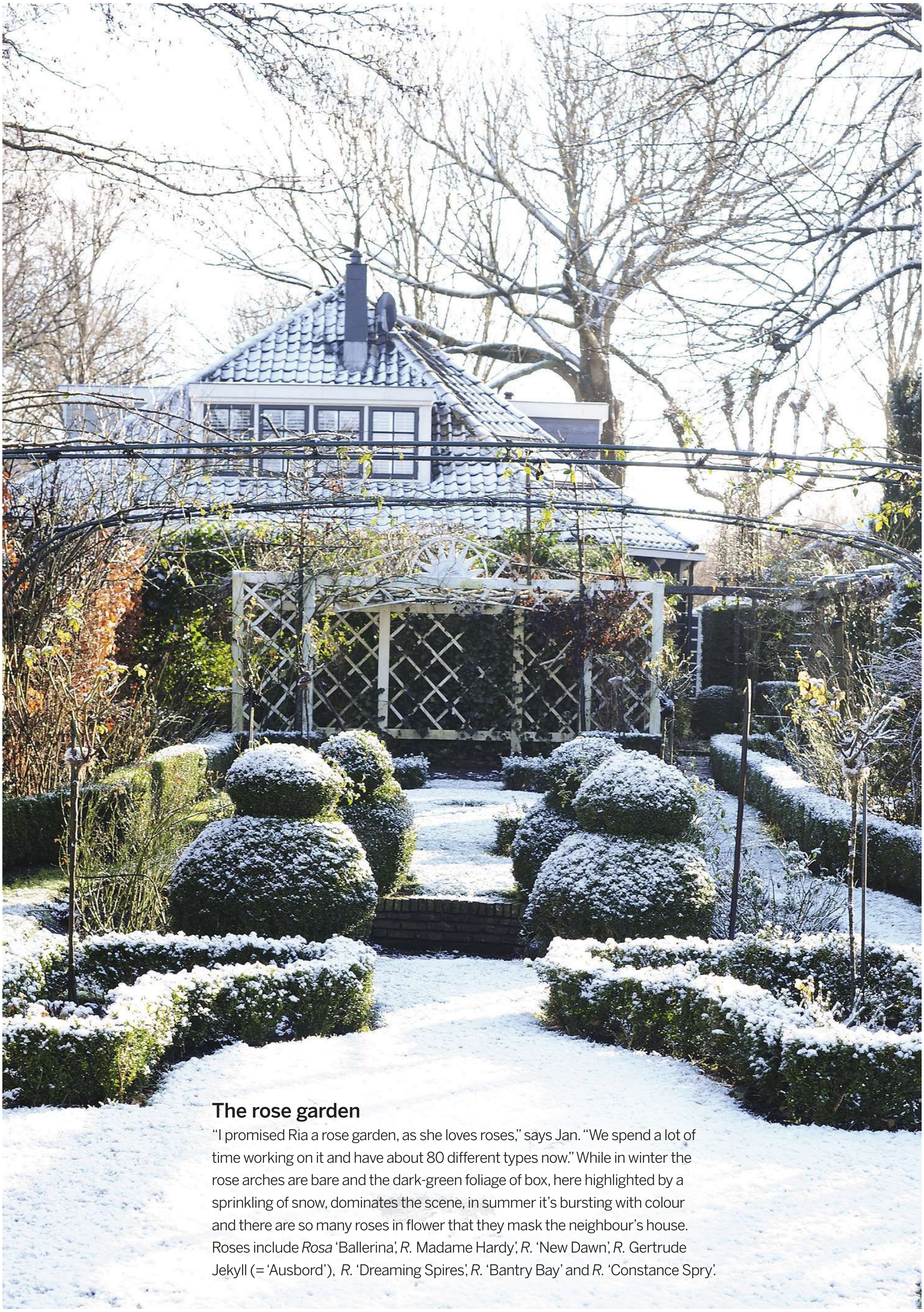
This page from top

The striking green, timber-clad house is typical of the region's historic buildings – although there are few left today – and adds a pop of colour during the grey months while also complementing the yew hedging.

Ria walks across the snow-covered bridge made from reclaimed wood by Jan, who has built lots of structures in the garden.

Cornus alba 'Sibirica' planted on the slope of a ditch provides year-round interest – yellow leaves and flowers in spring, blue berries and red-green leaves in autumn, and scarlet stems come winter.

A display of box shapes, a nod to the 17th-century geometric topiary gardens at Het Loo Palace in Apeldoorn, creates a welcoming entrance to Ria and Jan's home, along with a yew clipped into the shape of a basket, a wreath on the door and an old lantern.



The rose garden

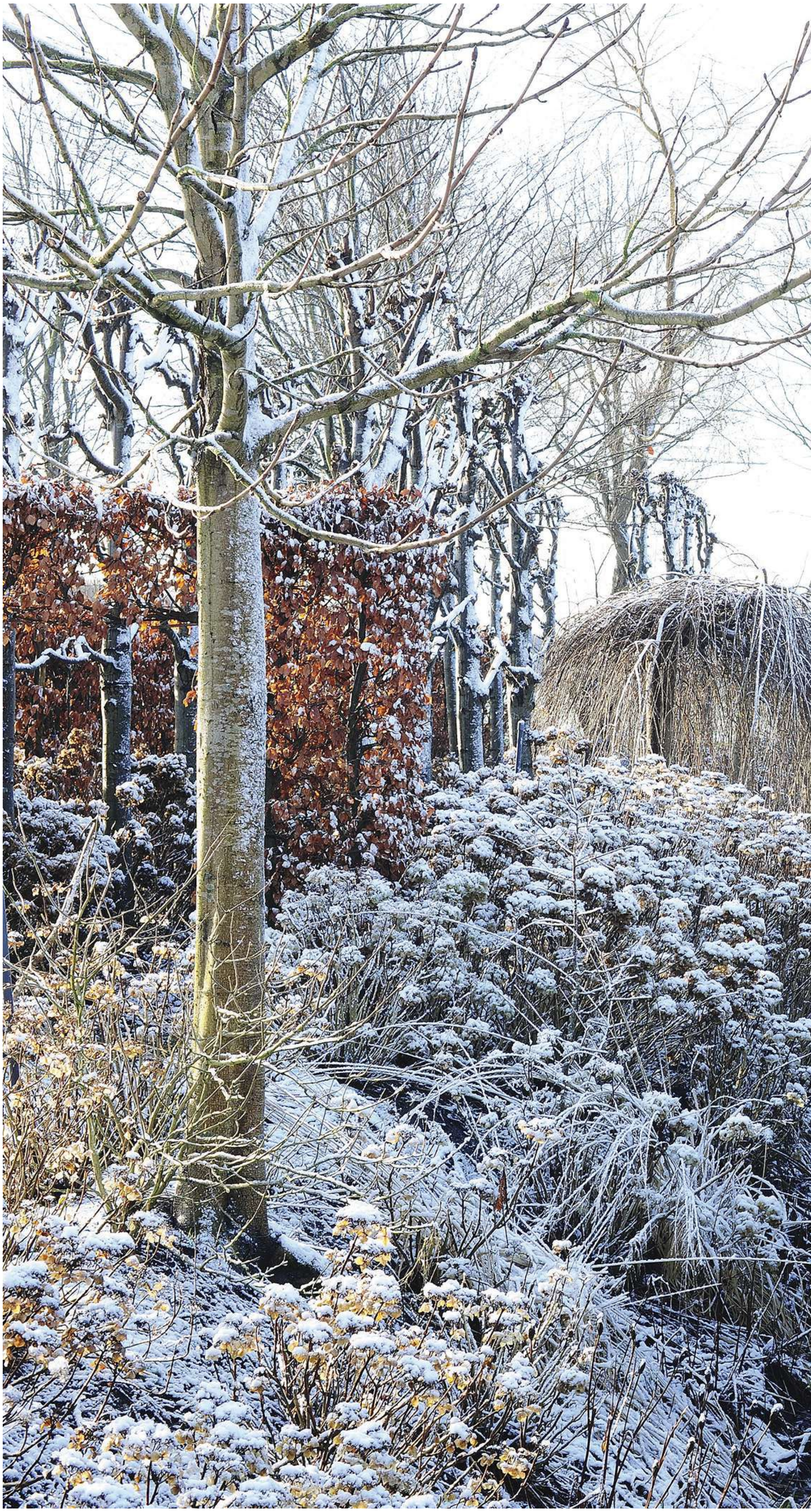
"I promised Ria a rose garden, as she loves roses," says Jan. "We spend a lot of time working on it and have about 80 different types now." While in winter the rose arches are bare and the dark-green foliage of box, here highlighted by a sprinkling of snow, dominates the scene, in summer it's bursting with colour and there are so many roses in flower that they mask the neighbour's house. Roses include *Rosa* 'Ballerina', *R.* Madame Hardy', *R.* 'New Dawn', *R.* Gertrude Jekyll (= 'Ausbord'), *R.* 'Dreaming Spires', *R.* 'Bantry Bay' and *R.* 'Constance Spry'.

> *“Trees give you so much more than plants. They are always beautiful, bringing life and colour to a garden throughout the year”*

▷ areas that are quite different in atmosphere – from a formal rose garden and a long, sunken hydrangea ‘valley’ to a wild meadow with heirloom fruit trees. But once you get a feel for the underlying geometry, you see they all tie together and link – through ‘windows’, archways and vistas – to the flat expanse beyond.

A connecting feature throughout the garden is the obvious love that Ria and Jan have for trees. Come winter, when the trees are stark silhouettes against a grey sky, they take on an extra dimension. They are like pieces of art, nature’s sculptures, that add to the collection of bronzes dotted around the garden. “Trees give you so much more than plants,” says Ria. “They are always beautiful. The interplay of the branches, bark, berries, flowers, leaves, fruit – they bring life and colour to a garden throughout the year.” The couple try to get out in the garden for a few hours every day. “We take a short holiday in January but that’s it,” says Ria. “As soon as we’re back, we start pruning.” And there is much to prune, from the *Fagus sylvatica* hedge that acts as a windbreaker along the northern edge to the perpendicular row of *Tilia platyphyllos* ‘Rubra’. The garden is home to no fewer than 45 viburnum cultivars that all need managing.

Originally a nurse, Ria attended a gardening course in Belgium. “I learned to look and see and tell a story.” The story Ria tells through her garden has a distinct theatrical feel, with the trees taking on different personalities throughout the year, against a changing backdrop. A prime example is Ria’s beloved *Sorbus commixta* ▷



The sunken hydrangea ‘valley’ in a swampy ditch has a mix of species, including *H. macrophylla*, *H. anomala*, *H. heteromalla* and *H. serrata* that are still showy in their faded winter form. Jan and Ria have also planted an avenue of mixed crab apple trees to one side.

The theatrical effect is most noticeable in a circular-shaped lawn, enclosed by three ascending rows of beech hedging, arranged like raked seating

▷ 'Dodong', which looks so different in summer, autumn and winter that it is hard to believe it is the same tree. Or the *Chionanthus virginicus* whose white fringes make room for olive-like grey fruits. Or how about the love story told by the *Broussonetia papyrifera*, which only came into its own when the female tree was given a male companion? And nothing says drama like the *Prunus* x *yedoensis* 'Pendula', with its branches, which hang to the ground, heavy with blossom in spring. The theatrical effect is most noticeable in a circular-shaped lawn, enclosed by three ascending rows of beech hedging, arranged like raked seating. Centre-stage is a square flowerbed around a garden urn. While this garden might reflect the man-made features of the region, there is no doubt that nature plays the starring role. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Jisperweg 142, 1464 NL, Beemster, the Netherlands.

Tel +31 (0)299 681 632.

Website tuinindebeemster.webklik.nl

Open The garden has open days in the spring and summer (see website for details) and can also be visited by appointment.

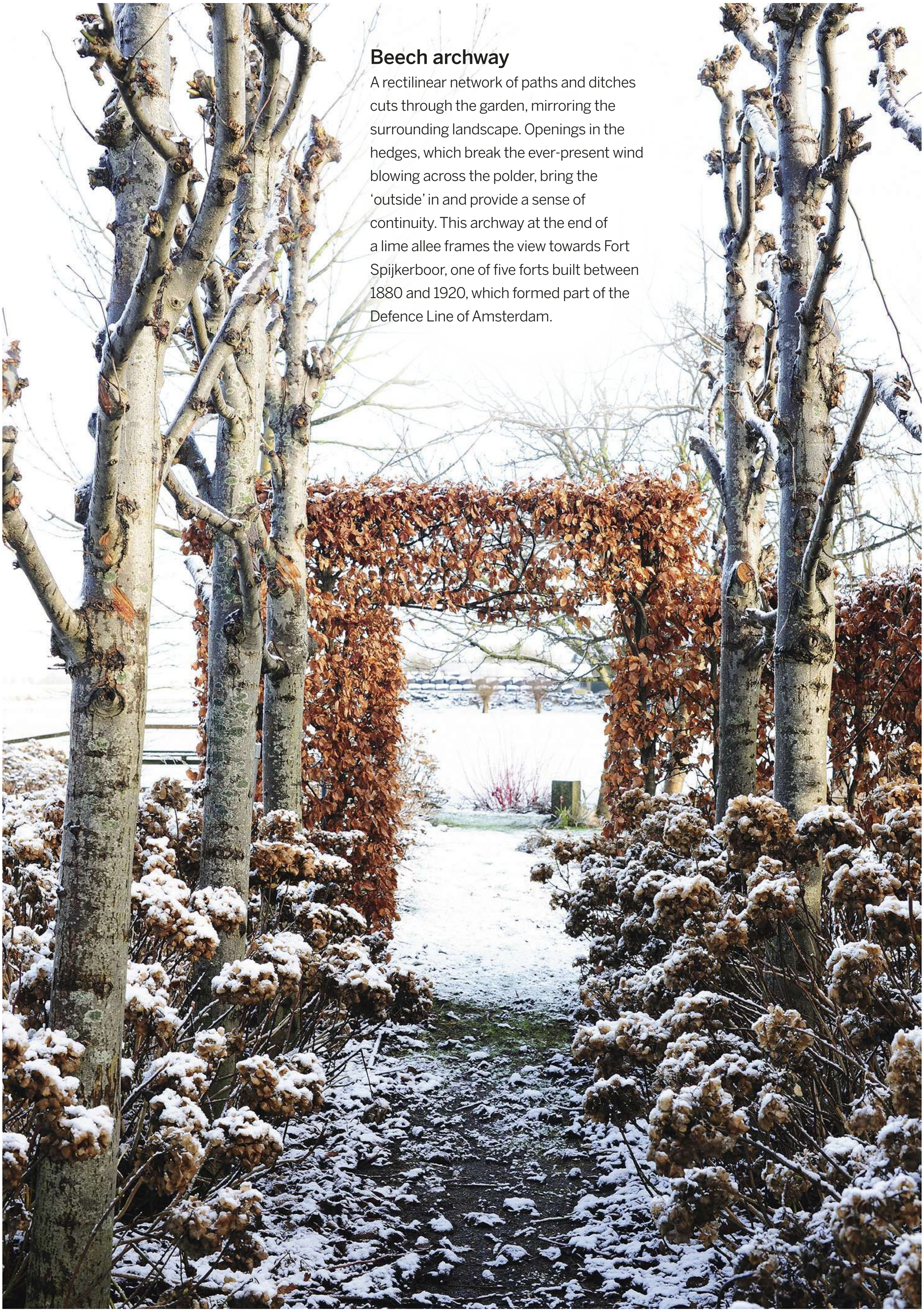
This page from top

An entryway is formed by two cherry bay trees (*Prunus lusitanica*) rising from neatly clipped yew hedging (*Taxus baccata*) that break up the formal lawns at the centre of the garden.

A box hedge shaped into a seat looks out on to the rose garden. Meanwhile the beech hedge has been given a square window through which you can see hydrangea flowering in summer.

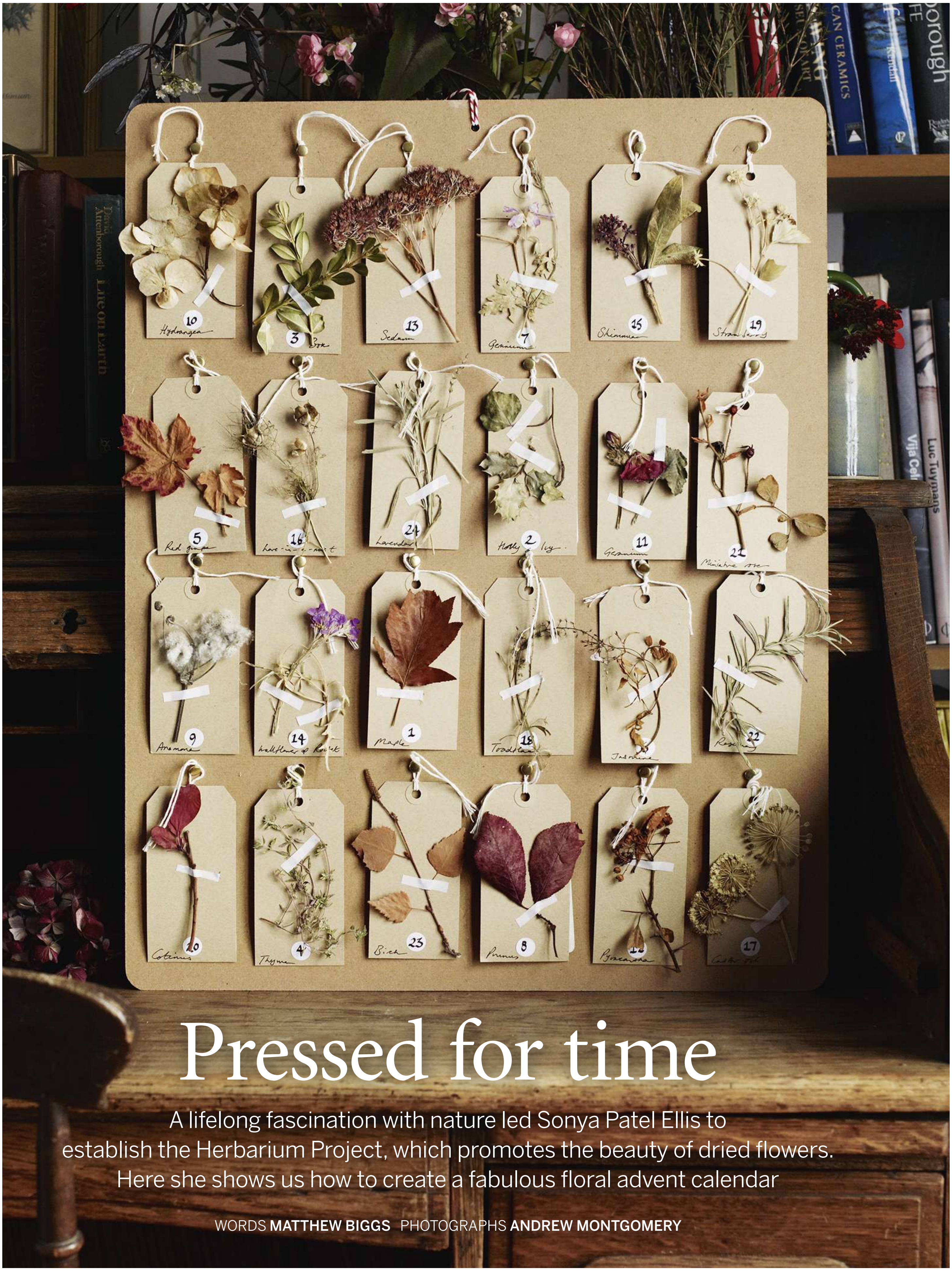
The glowing yellow branches of *Salix alba* 'Chermesina', underplanted with the bright red-stemmed *Cornus alba* 'Sibirica', frame a bridge flanked on one side by *Hydrangea macrophylla*.

Varying lengths and heights of beech hedge encircle this lawn, named 'the arena' by Jan and Ria. A square bed creates a central focal point.



Beech archway

A rectilinear network of paths and ditches cuts through the garden, mirroring the surrounding landscape. Openings in the hedges, which break the ever-present wind blowing across the polder, bring the 'outside' in and provide a sense of continuity. This archway at the end of a lime allee frames the view towards Fort Spijkerboor, one of five forts built between 1880 and 1920, which formed part of the Defence Line of Amsterdam.


10 Hydrangea
3 Box
13 Sedum
7 Geranium
15 Skimmia
19 Strawberry
5 Red grape
16 Love-in-a-mist
24 Lavender
2 Holly Ivy
11 Geranium
21 Miniature rose
9 Anemone
14 Wallflower & Rocket
1 Maple
18
Jasmine
22
20 Cotinus
4 Thyme
23 Birch
8 Prunus
Pyracantha
17

Pressed for time

A lifelong fascination with nature led Sonya Patel Ellis to establish the Herbarium Project, which promotes the beauty of dried flowers. Here she shows us how to create a fabulous floral advent calendar

WORDS **MATTHEW BIGGS** PHOTOGRAPHS **ANDREW MONTGOMERY**

Sonya prepares her Advent calendar by collecting samples of flowers and foliage from her garden.

It was not only scientists, such as Carl Linnaeus, who maintained herbaria but also the artist Paul Klee, the poet Emily Dickinson and the philosopher Rousseau

Sonya Patel Ellis resists society's inclination to specialise. "I love nature, making art, writing books, and delving into avenues of science and history," she says. "In my mind, everything is interconnected." Serendipity produced her perfect project. A proposal, via her work as a commissioning editor, to produce an illustrated book on pressed flowers initiated an inspiring journey through the world of herbaria, florilegia and botanical art. Sonya was intrigued to discover it was not only scientists, such as Carl Linnaeus, who maintained herbaria but also the artist Paul Klee, the poet Emily Dickinson and the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Sonya began experimenting and before she knew it had created a traditional wooden herbarium press and produced a collection of more than 100 pressed and mounted plant and flower specimens, collected over the course of a year from her garden in east London. The Herbarium Project was born.

"I wanted to share my discoveries," says Sonya. "Stimulate others to view the minutiae of nature and create new narratives about the world we live in, using the art and science of herbaria as an engaging pivot point." Sonya shares the ethos of the Herbarium Project through events, workshops, talks, writing projects and exhibitions including the award-winning *The Story Within*, which toured Newham Libraries in London throughout 2015; *Hortus Uptonensis* in West Ham Park; and *Seeing Floral – The Art of Florilegia* at The Garden Museum. The response to all of these has been overwhelming. Now for *Gardens Illustrated* readers Sonya has come up with an easy-to-make Christmas herbarium project – a flower-inspired advent calendar that gradually reveals a seasonal message – that is the perfect introduction to the art of flower pressing.

"To prepare your own herbarium advent calendar, you need at least 24 contrasting shapes, silhouettes, colours and textures, with some spares. Perfect specimens of winter's signature plants – holly, ivy, rose hips, seedheads and berries – highlight the season's glory," explains Sonya. "The best time to pick plants or flowers is when they have dried, mid-afternoon on a sunny winter's day or, alternatively, pick a bunch of flowers and bring them inside to dry in a clean, warm place."

Cut your chosen specimens to lengths of around 8cm so that each one will fit on a luggage label. Then carefully clean with a small brush or fine tweezers to remove debris, such as insects or pollen, and spread out on a drying sheet or piece of white blotting paper. It's best to take your cue from nature, and allow each one to fall naturally into place, simply intervening to spread out petals or show the best side of a leaf. Cover with a second drying sheet and press in a hobby press, or between the pages of a heavy, hardback book. This should take between ten to 17 days, although for best results you should allow three weeks.

Once all your specimens are dry, mount the best ones on to luggage labels (numbered one to 24) with gummed linen tape. Shuffle the labels so they are in a random order and then add your Christmas message – such as 'We Wish You a Merry Christmas' – to the back of the labels using Lexicon cards. Attach the labels, so they spell out your message, on to evenly spaced nails on a wooden backing board, then turn each flower side up, so that as you turn a tag each day in Advent your message is gradually revealed. Far more personal than any shop-bought version, and a lovely seasonal reminder of the beauty of nature. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Visit theherbariumproject.com for news of forthcoming exhibitions, books, workshops, events, and to purchase limited-edition artworks and books.

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Red grape

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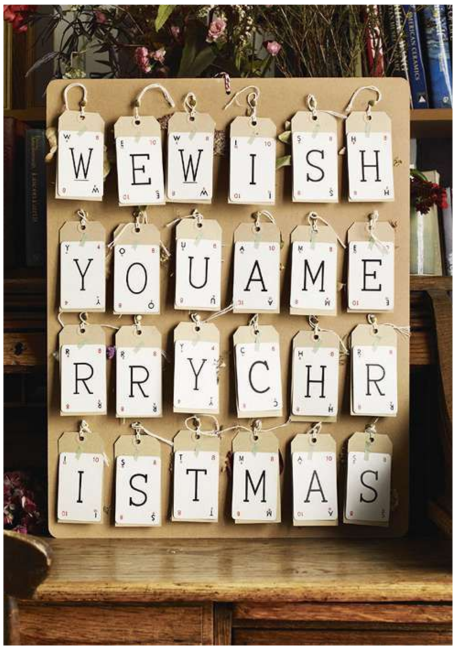

WEWISH
YOUAME
RRYCHR
ISTMAS

Plants to brighten winter days

We tend to think of winter as a dead time in the garden but there are still plenty of plants offering colour and interest to brighten chilly days

WORDS **ROSEMARY ALEXANDER**

***Hamamelis* x *intermedia* 'Vesna'**
Every garden needs a witch hazel for winter and this one, bred by the late Robert and Jelena de Belder of the well-known Aboretum Kalmthout in Belgium, flowers exceptionally early. Clusters of strongly scented, pale-orange petals appear on leafless stems in midwinter and last until spring. These are preceded by yellow, orange and red autumn foliage. Makes a vase-shaped bush and needs space to develop. 4m x 3m. AGM*. RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b†.

GAP PHOTOS/SHARON PEARSON

JULIET NICHOLAS

Rosemary Alexander is the founder and principal of the English Gardening School. She is also the author of several books on the subject of garden design.

When winter strips the garden down to the bare bones it is easier to assess what areas earn their keep and what can be improved or altered. It's worth keeping in mind that even in winter plants should be used to provide structure, form and colour.

Many key structural plants, including box and holly, come into their own once the fullness of the summer garden has subsided and their defined shapes can be fully appreciated. Evergreens have the added bonus of looking particularly stunning when enhanced by frost and snow.

When planting for bark and stem interest, light is another vital consideration, as subjects are invariably enhanced when lit by sunshine for at least part of the day. In contrast, in shaded or woodland areas, ground-cover foliage plants and ferns can act as a backdrop, and provide a foil to brightly coloured early flowering bulbs.

Strategically placed trees can direct and hold the eye when there is little else to notice; the open tracery of leafless trees will lead the eye aloft. When choosing trees, the dramatic winter effect of bark is often overlooked; when the foliage has dropped it is the bark and the tracery of twigs that will be seen for about seven months of the year. The coppery peeling bark of *Acer griseum* (see page 51) is a real show stopper and will punctuate a bank or border, holding attention for the whole year. For bark and blossom, the tiny white or pink flowers of *Prunus* x *subhirtella* 'Autumnalis' will hold their display from November until the spring and are best situated where their branches can be viewed against a clear sky.

Shrubs to brighten winter days should be chosen for leafless stems, such as the several members of dogwood (*Cornus*), or for early flowering and scent, such as witch hazels, which are the very life of the winter garden. Even after snow and icy winds, their curious twisted blooms endure. Many ▷

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.

▷ new cultivars are now being bred and the flowering times vary. One of the most conspicuous is the large, spreading shrub *Hamamelis* x *intermedia* 'Pallida'. Newer cultivars, such as *H.* x *intermedia* 'Vesna' (see previous page) or *H.* x *intermedia* 'Aphrodite', which are among the earliest to flower, grow into vase-shaped plants so need to be given enough space to spread outwards.

Winter-flowering *Viburnum* are more upright 'must-have' plants, their beautiful frost-resistant blooms exuding an unmissable fragrance. *Viburnum* x *bodnantense* 'Charles Lamont' produces bright-pink flowers before the foliage but if left to its own devices it can become congested, so best to remove up to a third of the oldest stems each year. For a taller evergreen with impressive foliage, try *Mahonia* x *media* 'Lionel Fortescue' or *M.* x *media* 'Winter Sun', which have bright-yellow racemes. The latter's more-or-less erect racemes open before others.

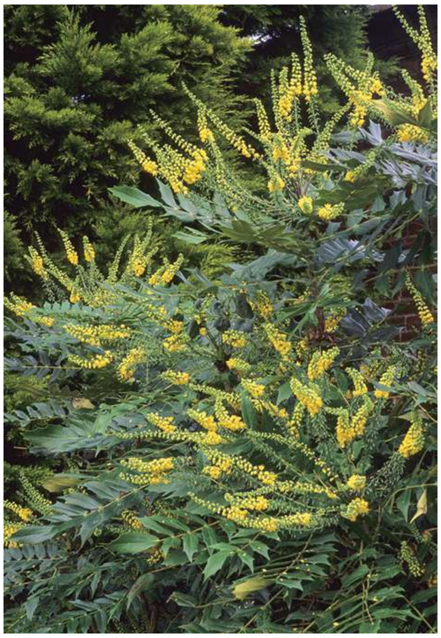
No winter garden would be complete without two other important evergreen shrubs: daphnes and sarcococcas. The sought-after *Daphne bholua*, which produces clusters of highly scented, pinkish-white flowers over the coldest months, will eventually grow into a medium-height, upright shrub, but needs to be placed where its scent can be enjoyed. The sarcococcas are smaller shrubs of neat bushy habit, but between their narrow leaves tiny white- and pink-tinted flowers have a warm sweetness. Try the darker green and more powerfully scented *Sarcococca confusa*, or the more suckering *S. hookeriana* var. *digyna* (see far right).

You can complement trees and shrubs with ground-cover perennials, such as *Ajuga incisa* 'Bikun', that do not vanish beneath ground in winter. You can also add in evergreen ferns, for example *Asplenium scolopendrium*, which keep their fronds until new ones begin to uncurl in spring. Punctuate these with early flowering bulbs. In recent years snowdrops have acquired an almost cult status and some cultivars are expensive, so for impact plant the less costly, common snowdrop, *Galanthus nivalis*, in groupings of five to 15 plants.

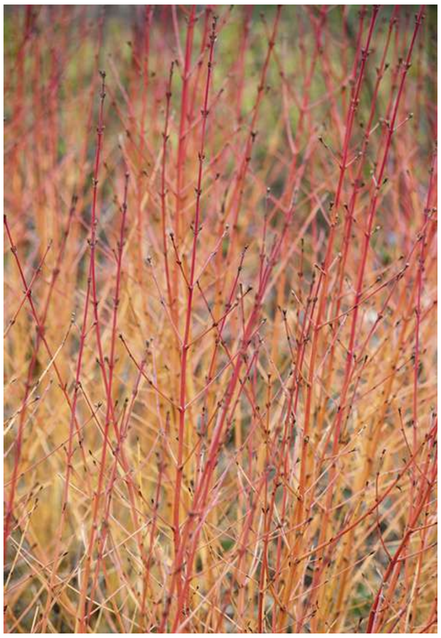
With so much choice you can create a thrilling winter garden to tempt you out into the garden on even the coldest days.

• Rosemary's recommendations of plants for winter interest continue over the next six pages

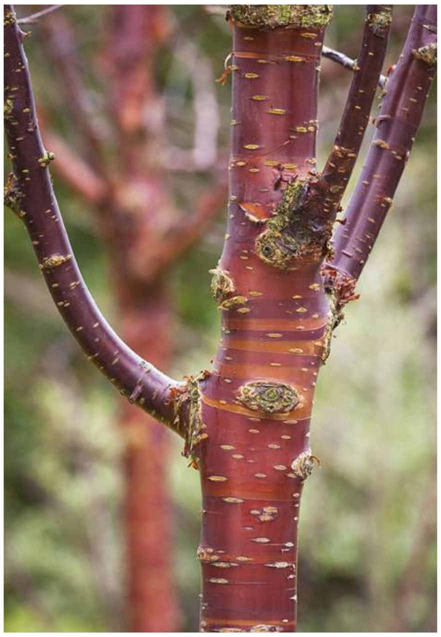
Trees and shrubs


HOLMES GARDEN PHOTOS / ALAMY

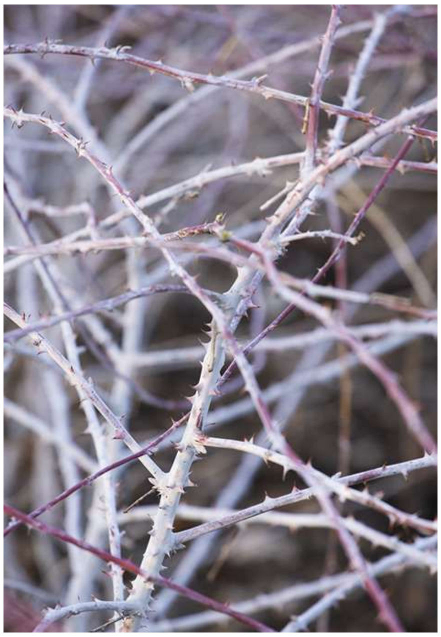
***Mahonia* x *media* 'Charity'**
Fragrant, yellow racemes of flowers appear in winter among spiky, evergreen foliage, upright at first then weeping with age. Old stems can be reduced by about one third when too large, and will soon rejuvenate. 5m x 4m. RHS H4.


JOHN MARTIN / ALAMY

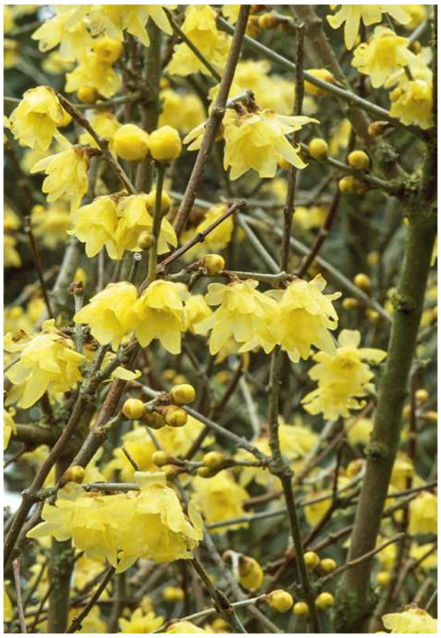
***Cornus sanguinea* 'Midwinter Fire'**
Its reddish-gold, leafless stems glow in late winter sun. Upright stems need to be cut back hard in early spring to promote long shoot extensions. Grows well in all but the driest conditions. 1.5m x 1m. RHS H6, USDA 5a-7b.


JONATHAN BUCKLEY

Prunus serrula
A fast-growing, small tree with spectacular reddish bark with exfoliating paper sheets. Narrow, willow-like leaves and small, white flowers in April. Thrives on free-draining soil. 10m x 10m. RHS H6, USDA 5a-6b.

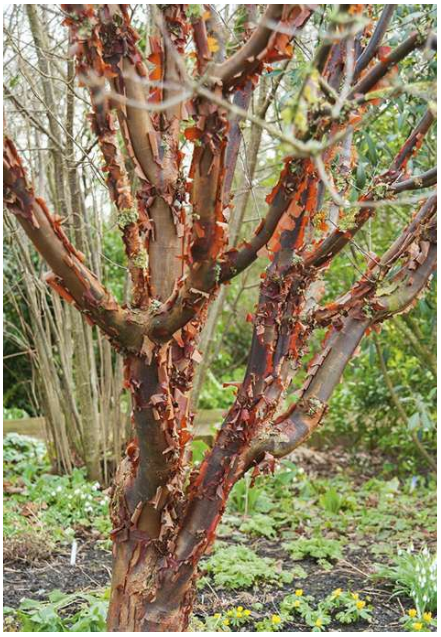

CLIVE NICHOLS / GAP PHOTOS

***Rubus cockburnianus* 'Goldenvale'**
Its strongly ascending, prickly stems, an almost brilliant silvered, chalk-white, show up against a dark evergreen or light up a border. Sun and any well-drained soil. 2.5m x 2.5m. AGM. RHS H5.



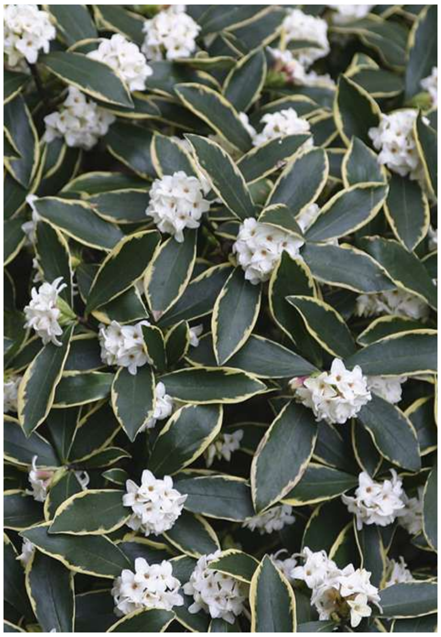
MADDIE THORNHILL / GAP PHOTOS

Chimonanthus praecox **'Luteus'**
Bright-yellow, waxy tepals, stained purple in the centre, emerge in winter on leafless twigs. Not showy but exceptionally fragrant. Plant by a path where you will most enjoy the scent. 4m x 3m. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 6a-9b.



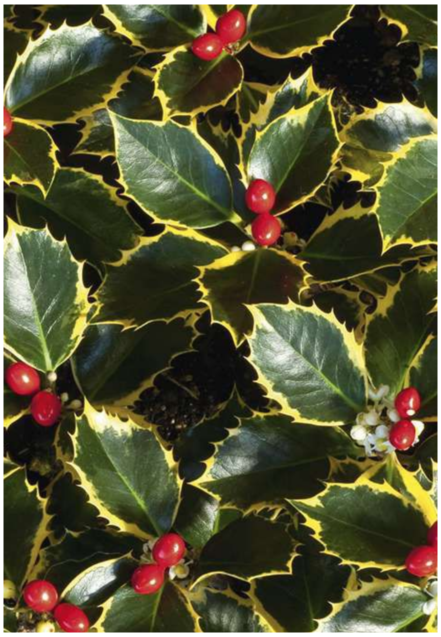
CAROLE DRAKE / GAP PHOTOS

Acer griseum
Small tree with fabulous peeling bark. Tolerant of well-drained alkaline or acid clay soils. Works well as a multi-stemmed tree, underplanted with *Anemanthele lessoniana*. 10m x 10m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.



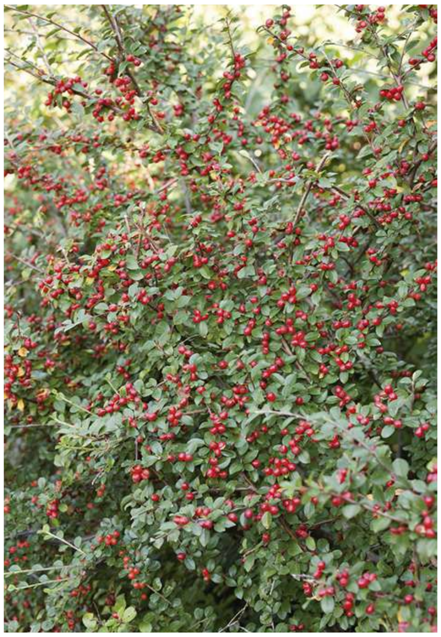
WWW.ERICAGLASENER.COM

Daphne odora **'Aureomarginata Alba'**
Alluring fragrance lasts over long winter months. Rose-purple flower buds at stem tips with lustrous, dark-green leaves edged in yellow. Makes a good, low-growing focal point in well-drained soil. 1m x 1.5m. USDA 8a-10b.



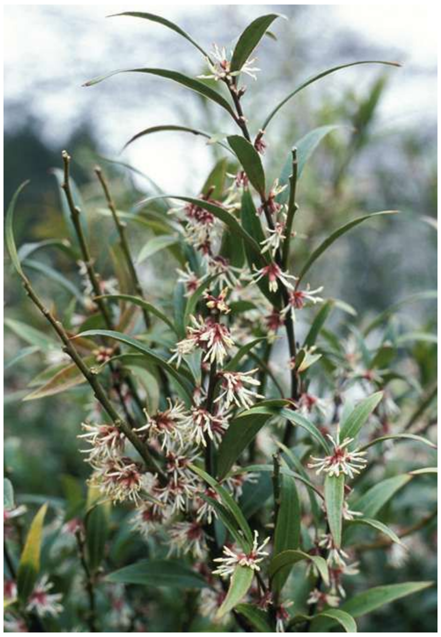
ROBERTO NISTRI / ALAMY

Ilex aquifolium **'Argentea Marginata'**
Glossy leaves, edged in gold, set off abundant red berries. Can be used as a rounded shrub, pyramidal tree or hedge. A male and female that flower at the same time are best for pollination. Any soil. 15m x 5m. AGM. RHS H6.



FP / NOVA PHOTO GRAPHIK / THE GARDEN COLLECTION

Cotoneaster **x *suecicus* 'Coral Beauty'**
A fast-growing, medium-sized shrub, with small, round, red fruits that last through autumn and winter. Requires regular annual pruning to maintain a good shape.
2m x 1m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b.



SARAH CUTTLE / GAP PHOTOS

Sarcococca hookeriana **var. *digyna***
A multi-stemmed, suckering shrub with lustrous mid-green foliage and small, sweetly fragrant flowers from late November to mid February. Can form a medium-sized hedge.
1m x 1.5m. RHS H5, USDA 6a-10b.

Climbers, perennials and flowering plants

MARIANNE MAJERUS

***Clematis cirrhosa* 'Jingle Bells'**
Several *Clematis cirrhosa* perform from mid to late winter, and need pruning only if they've outgrown their space. This one is particularly good scrambling over a low wall, where the flowers can be admired. 5m x 2m.

REX MAY / ALAMY

***Hedera colchica* 'Sulphur Heart'**
Vigorous and adaptable, its slightly wavy, green leaves splashed with yellow brighten up walls and fences. Can be threaded through large metal trellis or fence to form a 'fedge'. 5m x 5m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6a-11.

HOWARD RICE / GAP PHOTOS

***Rosa* x *odorata* (Sanguinea Group) 'Bengal Crimson'**
A remarkable, relatively thornless China rose that flowers at the Chelsea Physic Garden almost all year round. Requires the protection of a warm wall. 5m x 1m. AGM. RHS H5.

TOMMY TONSBERG / GAP PHOTOS

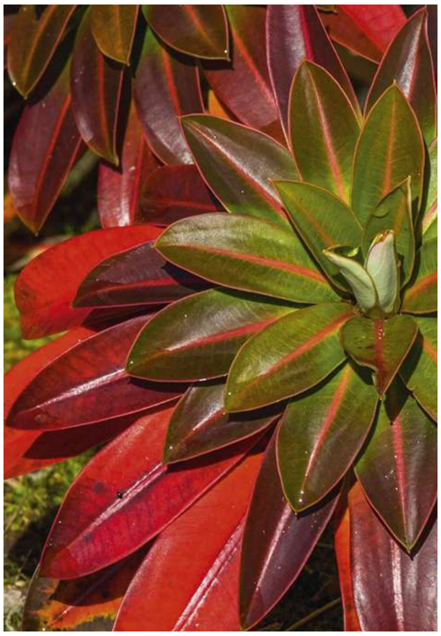
Helleborus foetidus
An adaptable native form of hellebore with pale-green flower heads and slender leaflets of green foliage with an unpleasant smell. Effective with white crocuses and snowdrops. 80cm x 45cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

J S SIRA / GAP PHOTOS

Helleborus* x *ericsmithii
Produces white or pink upward-facing flowers that age to grey-pink from December to May. Foliage can be pure green but with distinctive rose-coloured stems. Performs best if well fed. 40cm x 40cm.

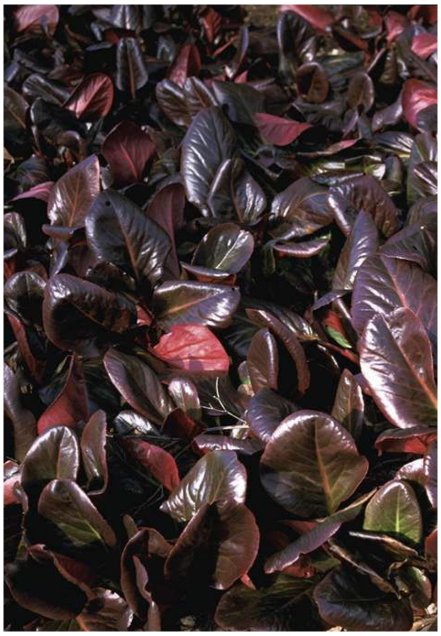
ANDREA JONES / GARDEN WORLD IMAGES

Liriope muscari
Stiff, crowded spikes of long lasting violet-mauve flowers show up in late autumn and winter against dense tufts of dark, evergreen strap-shaped leaves. Tolerates acid soil and hot, dry conditions. 30cm x 45cm.



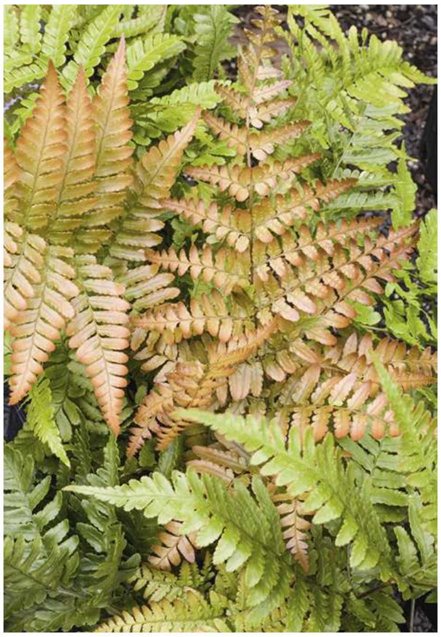
REX HARRISON / GARDEN WORLD IMAGES

Euphorbia stygiana
A rare evergreen shrubby species that exists in the wild only in the Azores. Its floral leaves appear as pale yellow in May and June, and then adopt a pillar-box red colour in winter. 90cm. USDA 8b.



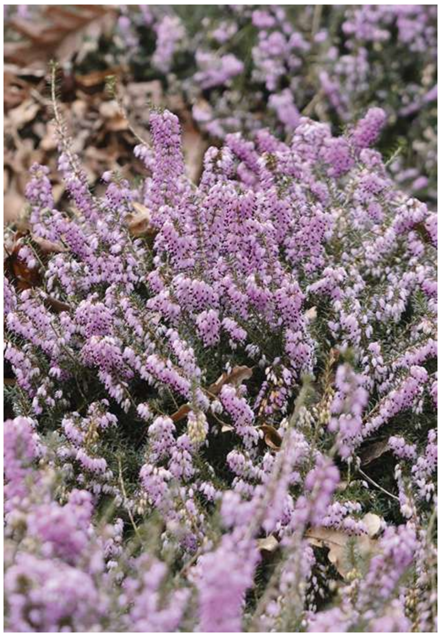
GARDEN WORLD IMAGES

***Bergenia* 'Eric Smith'**
A useful evergreen plant to 'fix' the corners of a border and a great foil for early bulbs, such as snowdrops. Its large, leathery, clump-forming foliage turns beetroot red in winter. 45cm x 45cm. AGM. RHS H7.



JERRY PAVIA / GAP PHOTOS

Dryopteris erythrosora
A medium-sized fern with evergreen reddish coppery new growth produced throughout the growing season. Best planted in groups, and effective to set off early flowering bulbs. 60cm x 40cm. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 5a-9a.



STEFFEN HAUSER / BOTANIKFOTO / ALAMY

***Erica carnea* 'December Red'**
Heather has become unfashionable, but there are few better winter-flowering plants. Cultivars range in colour from white to light purple to wine red, but this pink one is very lovely. 60cm x 30cm. USDA 5a-7b.

Planting

To get the best out of your winter-performing plants you should give some thought as to where you want to position them so that they will offer you maximum visual impact while also giving some consideration to their preferred conditions, such as sun or shade and soil type.

Rather than thinking about a plant in isolation, try to create a grouping made up of perhaps one evergreen shrub, surrounded by two or three groups of perennials or ground-cover plants and use bulbs to punctuate and liven up the scene.

When planting, remember that even in winter, the soil can be dry, so after digging an appropriately sized hole, fill it with water and wait for this to be absorbed before you set the plant in, firm up the soil and water in.

Further reading

365 Days of Colour in your Garden
by Nick Bailey
(Kyle Books, 2015).

A Gardener's Guide to Bulbs
by Christine Skelmersdale
(Crowood Press, 2012).

The Creative Shrub Garden: Eye-Catching Combinations That Make Shrubs the Stars of Your Garden
by Andy McIndoe
(Timber Press, 2014).

Designing and Planting a Woodland Garden: Plants and Combinations That Thrive in the Shade
by Keith Wiley
(Timber Press, 2015).

The Timber Press Encyclopedia of Flowering Shrubs: More Than 1,500 Outstanding Garden Plants
by Jim Gardiner
(Timber Press, 2012).

All of these titles are available from the *Gardens Illustrated* bookshop at a discount. For details of how to order see page 102. *365 Days of Colour in your Garden* by Nick Bailey is also one of the bonus gifts available to new subscribers, for details see page 32.

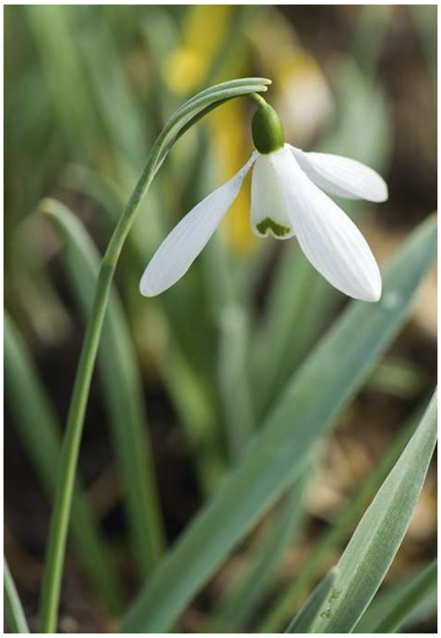
Where to see

- **Anglesey Abbey**
  Quy Road, Lode, Cambridge,
  Cambridgeshire CB25 9EJ.
  Tel 01223 810080, nationaltrust.org.uk/anglesey-abbey
- **Bodnant Gardens**
  Tal-y-Cafn, near Colwyn Bay,
  Conwy LL28 5RE.
  Tel 01492 650460, nationaltrust.org.uk/bodnant-garden/
- **Cambo** (for snowdrops)
  Cambo House, Kingsbarns,
  St Andrews, Fife KY16 8QD.
  Tel 01333 450054, camboestate.com
- **RHS Garden Harlow Carr**
  Crag Lane, Beckwithshaw, Harrogate,
  North Yorkshire HG3 1QB.
  Tel 0845 265 8070, rhs.org.uk
- **Sir Harold Hillier Gardens**
  Jermyns Lane, Ampfield, Romsey,
  Hampshire SO51 0QA.
  Tel 01794 368787, www3.hants.gov.uk/hilliergardens
- **RHS Garden Wisley**
  Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB.
  Tel 0845 260 9000, rhs.org.uk

Where to buy

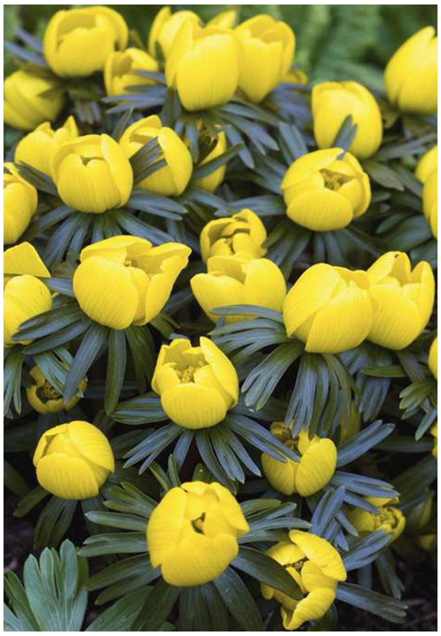
- **Avon Bulbs**
  Burnt House Farm, Mid Lambrook,
  South Petherton, Somerset TA13 5HE.
  Tel 01460 242177, avonbulbs.co.uk
- **Beth Chatto Gardens**
  Elmstead Market, Colchester,
  Essex CO7 7DB.
  Tel 01206 822007, bethchatto.co.uk
- **Majestic Trees**
  Chequers Meadow, Chequers Hill,
  Flamstead, Nr St Albans,
  Hertfordshire. AL3 8ET.
  Tel 01582 843 881,
  majestictrees.co.uk
- **Marchants Hardy Plants**
  2 Marchants Cottages, Mill Lane,
  Laughton, East Sussex BN8 6AJ.
  Tel 01323 811737,
  marchantshardyplants.co.uk
- **Witch Hazel Nursery**
  The Granary, Callaways Lane,
  Newington, Sittingbourne,
  Kent ME9 7LU. Tel 01795 843098,
  witchhazelnursery.com

Bulbs



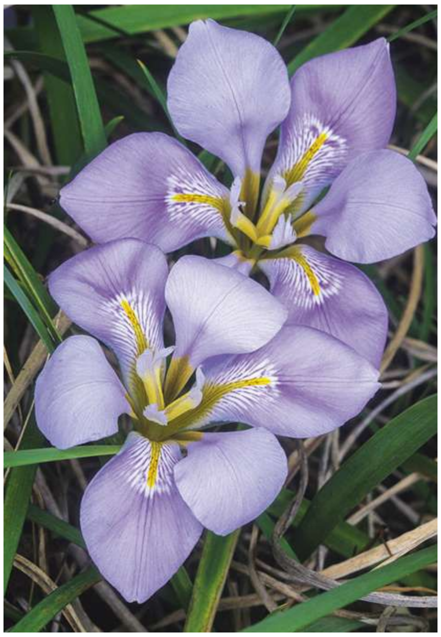
CAROLE DRAKE / GAP PHOTOS

***Galanthus elwesii* 'Mrs Macnamara'**
Tall, elegant and robust, and out in December. Inner segments have a narrow green 'V' at the apex, and glaucous leaves. Easy to grow, and the bulbs benefit from regular lifting and division. 20cm. RHS H5.



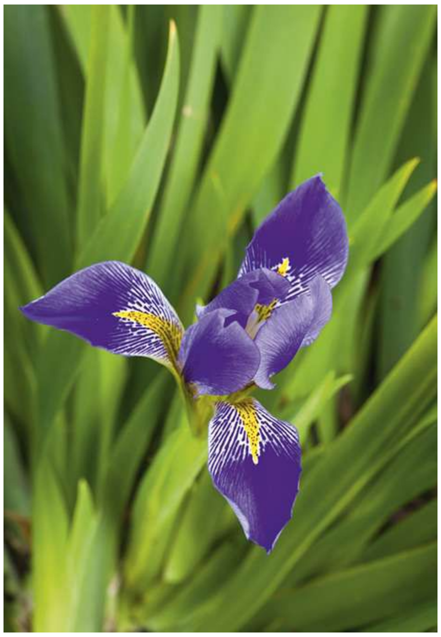
GAP PHOTOS

***Eranthis hyemalis* (Tubergenii Group) 'Guinea Gold'**
Often in flower before snowdrops, this superior and larger flowering hybrid has a finely dissected 'ruff' of leaves around the flower. Needs to be dry in summer. 10cm.



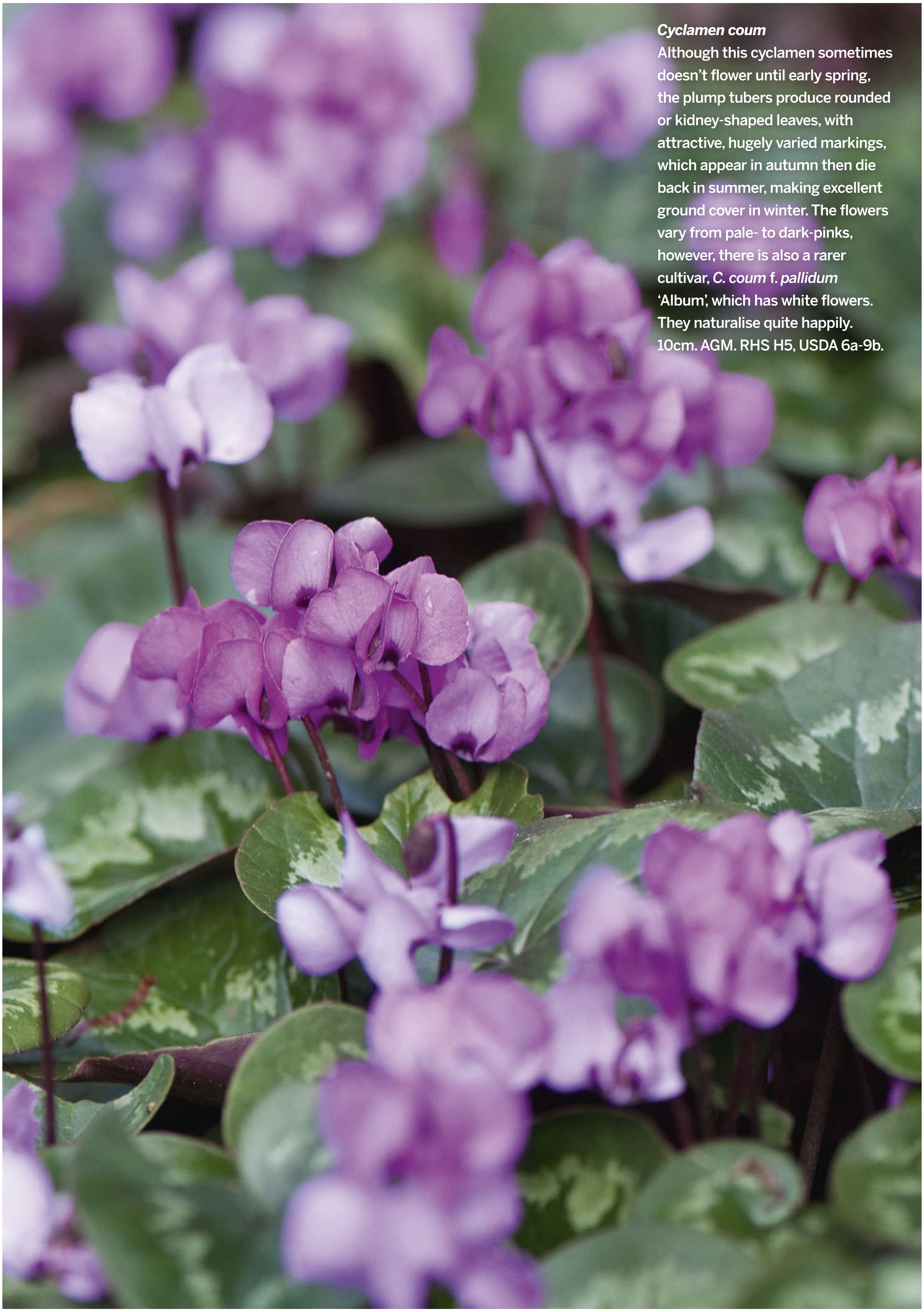
OHN GLOVER / ALAMY

***Iris unguicularis* 'Walter Butt'**
Produces sweetly scented, pale-blue flowers on and off from Christmas until the end of March. Will put up with dry conditions and light shade. Trim off any untidy foliage to show off the flower to best advantage. 45cm.



JONATHAN BUCKLEY / GAP PHOTOS

Iris lazica
A relative of *I. unguicularis* that comes from the Black Sea coast. It prefers a shaded bed beneath a north wall where it will produce narrow, heavily veined and long-lasting purple-blue flowers. 50cm. AGM. RHS H5.



Cyclamen coum
Although this cyclamen sometimes doesn't flower until early spring, the plump tubers produce rounded or kidney-shaped leaves, with attractive, hugely varied markings, which appear in autumn then die back in summer, making excellent ground cover in winter. The flowers vary from pale- to dark-pinks, however, there is also a rarer cultivar, *C. coum* f. *pallidum* 'Album', which has white flowers. They naturalise quite happily. 10cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.

GEORGIANNA LANE / ©GARDEN WORLD IMAGES

Bunny Guinness

Juggling a business with writing and Radio 4's *GQT*, the landscape architect, author and all-round gardening buff is quite a force to be reckoned with

WORDS **CAMILLA SWIFT** PORTRAIT **CHARLIE HOPKINSON**

Bunny Guinness is a formidable multitasker. Renowned garden designer, landscape architect, author, passionate gardener, she has fronted several television shows, is a regular panellist on BBC Radio 4's *Gardeners' Question Time* and writes a weekly column for *The Sunday Telegraph*. All of which she appears to juggle quite effortlessly. "It's a jolly healthy mix," she says. "I love it." Despite the fact she started her own garden-design business in 1986 and having had two children in her late twenties, you'd be hard pushed to put her much beyond the age of 35. Slight of build with long blonde hair, a determined stride and a penchant for short skirts, Bunny could have hopped straight out of the pages of *The Famous Five*. Passion and energy govern everything she does. Her real name, allegedly, is Peta. Hence rabbit? Thence Bunny? No. A round, fat baby with dark little eyes, she was nicknamed Bun, as in current bun. And it stuck – the name, not the bun-like looks.

She comes from keen, and expert, horticultural stock. Her grandmother had a wonderful garden whose drive a five-year-old Bunny would resentfully weed for sixpence a time while her mother, who owned and ran a nursery, wandered around "yakking on about roses" with her uncle, David Austin. Bunny loved the outdoors and ponies, but didn't have time for gardening. At university she studied food science, quickly realised life in the lab wasn't for her and, after meeting someone at a party who waxed lyrical about horticulture, saw the light and switched. A degree in horticulture, a three-year post graduate diploma in landscape architecture and several years in private practice later, she set up on her own, designing commercial schemes, public spaces and private gardens across the UK, Europe and Asia.

It's a good thing Bunny is a workaholic – she currently has a three-month waiting list. But by weaving intensive, one-day consultations in among ongoing big projects ("about five at the moment") she can run a streamlined office with her daughter Unity, also a landscape architect, who is design-led and computer savvy (Bunny prefers pen and paper). Her husband Kevin oversees the accounts. Son Freddie has escaped to study medicine in London.

Bunny especially loves designing private gardens. Structure, texture, synergy between house and garden, low maintenance, are all hallmarks of her style. "People want gardens that are easy to manage and live with, that they can lock up and leave. Who wants a garden running away from them?" she says. Many clients are what she calls repeat offenders. "I'm now working for three generations."

She's won six gold medals at Chelsea, despite Kevin threatening divorce if she ever did another. "That was seven Chelseas ago," she smiles. Making a garden happen overnight that would normally take 15 years to mature is a steep learning curve but it's "irresistible, the total opposite of gardening in real life".

It was while working at Chelsea that a random man approached her waving a mic and a list of gardening questions: she was being recruited as a panellist for *GQT*. She's since been solving listeners' plant problems for 17 years. Her encyclopaedic horticultural knowledge notwithstanding, she admits to still having butterflies before a recording. Questions come unseen, so there is always the worry of The One She Cannot Answer, and blanking the name of a reliable squash that fruits even in a cold summer is irritating, but it's the over-specific question she dreads: plants for north-facing, 3m x 5m borders is "tricky to answer if you can't see house, soil, aspect or you're not sure what sort of person they are". And *GQT*'s enduring appeal? She simply quotes *Channel 4 News* presenter Krishnan Guru-Murthy, who listens to the show – "I don't garden, it just makes me feel good".

Her weekly column for *The Telegraph* she values too, for making her "go places, research, learn new things" but she is happiest returning home to her own garden; her sanctuary. It's "a bit of an orphan", shoehorned in around design work, lucky to get a day a week from her, yet from an unpromising blend of bad fields, concrete, and corrugated iron sheds she has created a stunning eight acres of woodland, meadow, terraces, hornbeam walkways framing a formal canal and a glorious vegetable garden. A shop window for clients, a playground for trialling plants she later uses professionally – "I don't feel I know a plant until I've grown it" – it is principally for living in while also providing most of the family's food. Her menagerie of sheep, pigs, cattle and chickens help maintain it and fill the freezer.

Little wonder Bunny would prefer to be in her garden than anywhere else in the world. "It energises me, even when I'm exhausted," she says. "Just a few hours in the fresh air puts the spring back in my step. Even after all these years I really do love gardening. There is nothing else I would rather do." □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Bunny Guinness Landscape Design, Sibberton Lodge, Thornhaugh,
Peterborough PE8 6NH. Tel 1780 782518, bunnyguinness.com

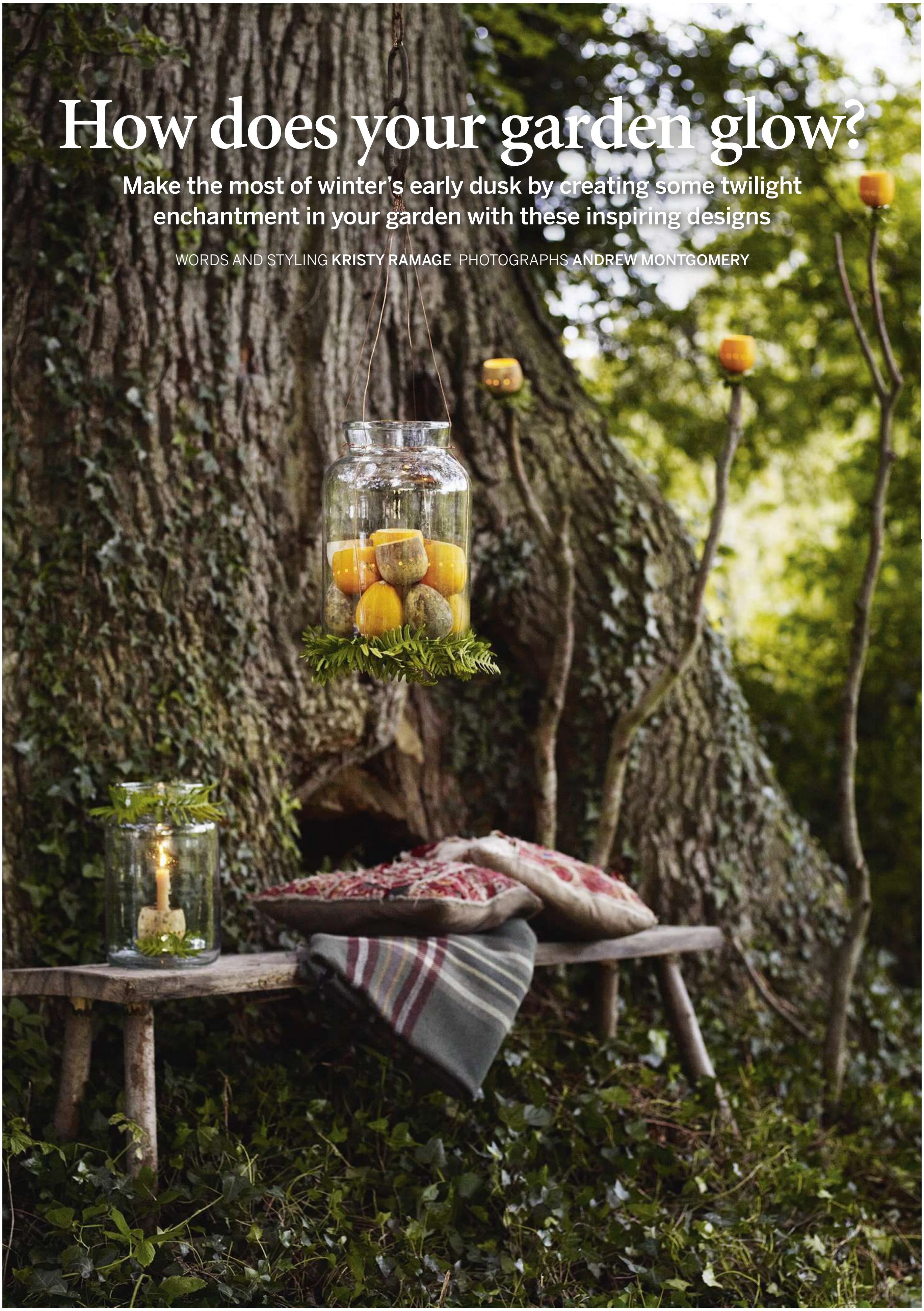
NEXT MONTH The Gangsta Gardener Ron Finley.

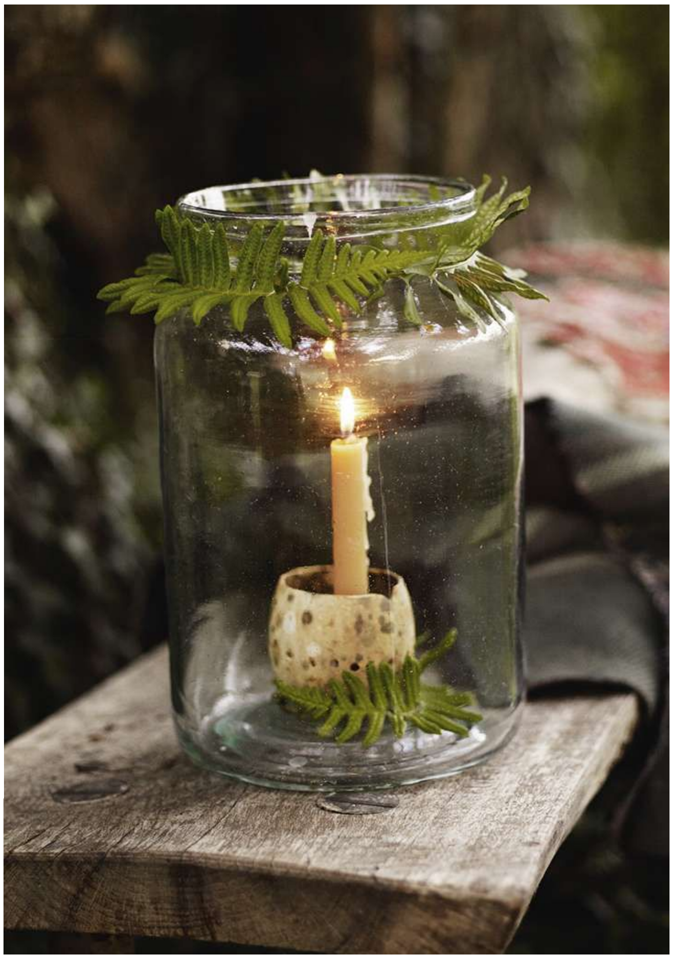
Bunny especially loves designing private gardens. Structure, texture, synergy between house and garden, low maintenance, are all hallmarks of her style

How does your garden glow?

Make the most of winter's early dusk by creating some twilight enchantment in your garden with these inspiring designs

WORDS AND STYLING **KRISTY RAMAGE** PHOTOGRAPHS **ANDREW MONTGOMERY**





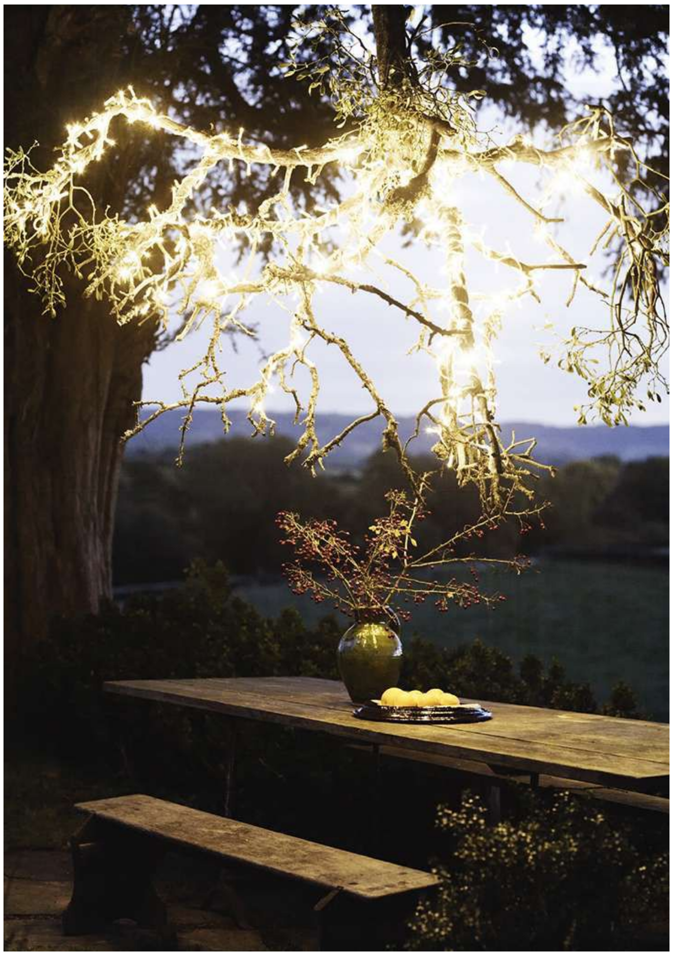
Gourd candle holders (left and above)

I had the slight misfortune to grow an enormous crop of gourds last year when I would rather have grown pumpkins. Somehow seed got muddled but a year on, these hard-skinned gourds were hollowing themselves out and getting rather interesting, speckled-egg-like markings. Some were still orange and fleshy, but were easily carved out, and the result was perfect natural tea-light holders.

To make

To hollow out the gourds, cut the tops off (I used a small toothed hacksaw) and carve out as you would with a pumpkin, then drill holes around the circumference to let extra light spill out. A group of the gourds and gourd 'cups' in a large glass jar, bridled with copper wire, made a lantern hanging from the oak tree but I saved a single spotted gourd, like a rare specimen, for a jar of its own. For this one I used a beeswax candle for illumination. By attaching gourd cups to the tops of sturdy sticks (see left) you have an alternative to garden flares for lighting a path. Just make an extra hole in the base of the gourd cup and a pilot hole in top of the stick, then attach them together with a screw. Warming to the aesthetic of a botanical collection, I made single fronds of fern into rings, using florist's wire, to dress the tops of the sticks, and multiple fronds for the base and the neck of the jars.

Florist's wire from Floristry Supplies; large jars from Baileys Home.



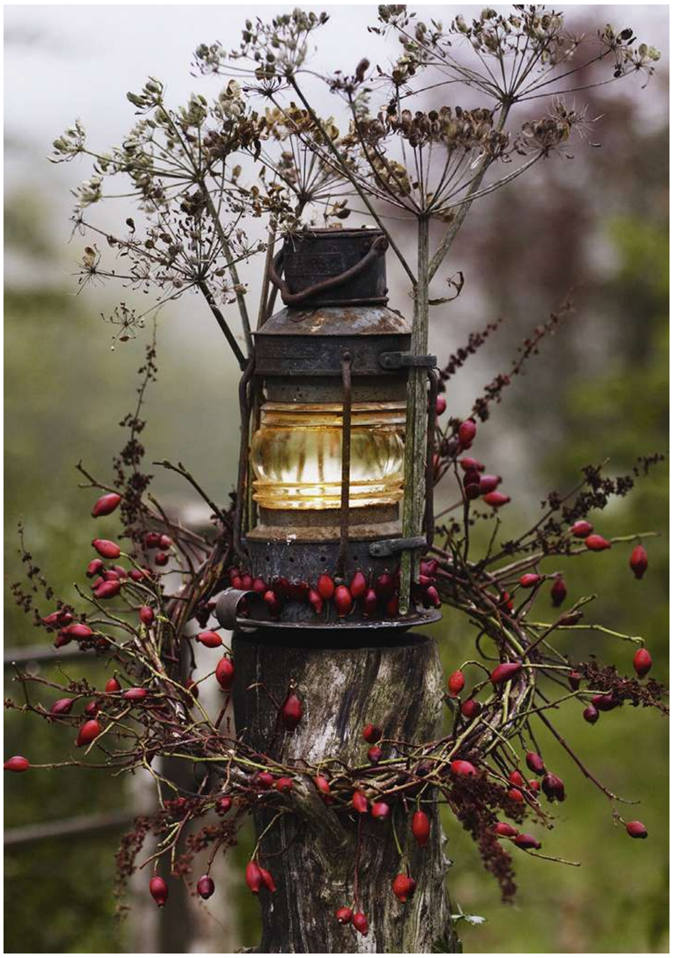
Branch chandelier

Between a pair of 400-year-old yew trees we have a table on a terrace, above which we have always wanted a light. Against these enormous trunks we needed something of dramatic scale and character, and a fallen apple tree from the orchard provided the answer. A hefty limb, with well-forked and spaced branches, was hoisted into the air on a chain hung on a rope between the two yews. A pulley in one tree allows us to raise and lower the light.

To make

The light is provided by strings of warm-white fairy lights, which can cleverly be split and discreetly joined in numerous ways, ideal for wrapping a branched structure. The cables were wrapped tightly around the branches, illuminating them as evenly as possible. This 'chandelier' took four strings of 80 LED lights, each on eight metres of clear cable. It casts a lovely warm pool of light over the table, and looks more and more spectacular as the night gets blacker. Mistletoe is prevalent on the apple trees still standing in the orchard, and is useful for covering the inevitable clusters of wires at the splitting points and the ends of the branches. A smaller version, made of branches wired together, could be hung from a single point. But be brave and bold – the success of a lighting statement such as this relies upon its scale.

Warm white connectable LED fairy lights from Lights4fun.



Post light

Lighting up an entrance, whether it's a gateway that leads to the house, or one that takes you to another part of the garden, is not only about the practical illumination of a point of arrival. It's also about the welcoming of guests and building a sense of anticipation for what lies ahead.

To make

Oil lamps and candle lanterns are ideal for hanging on gate posts, secured on the top or even sitting at the base. If the lamp or the gate post is grand, you may need no further embellishment. If it's a little more rustic, you might want to embroider that sign of welcome with a bit more effort. My lantern, an old oil lamp that has lost its innards and now holds a candle, has wonderful thick lens glass around the light, but no refinement beyond that. The skeletal seedheads of common hogweed (shake to remove the actual seeds so you don't spread them) are light and easily attached, and give the lantern much more volume and presence. Around the wooden post hangs a rosehip wreath, with a little extra drama added by the dried spires of dock seedheads (again shake off the seeds). Around the lantern itself I made a circlet of rosehips, made from picking up those that fell to the floor as I made the wreath and threading them on to wire.

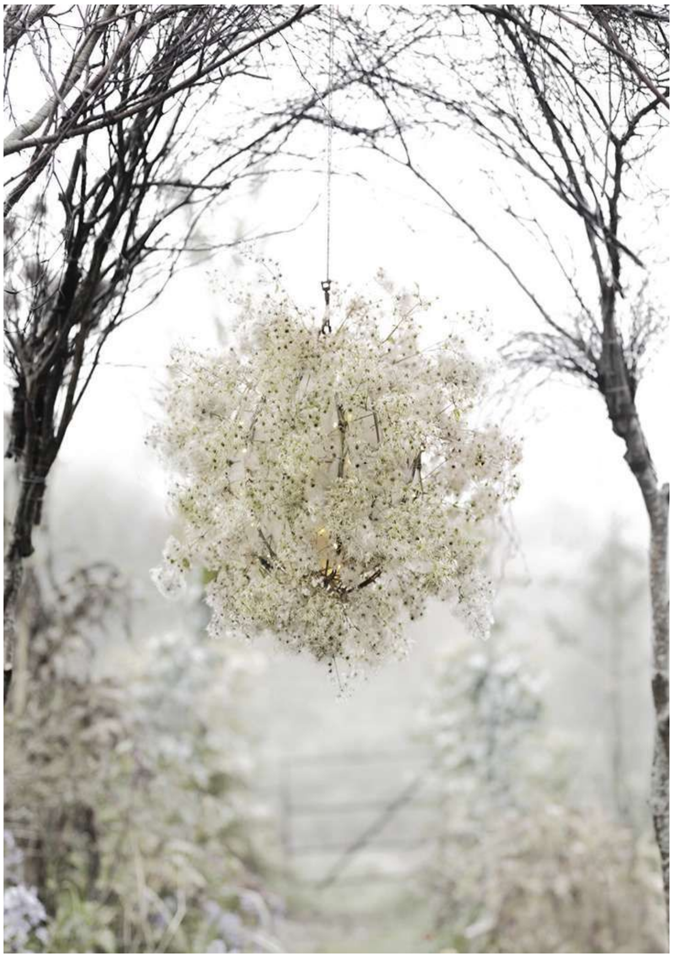
Florist's wreath rings and wire from Floristry Supplies.

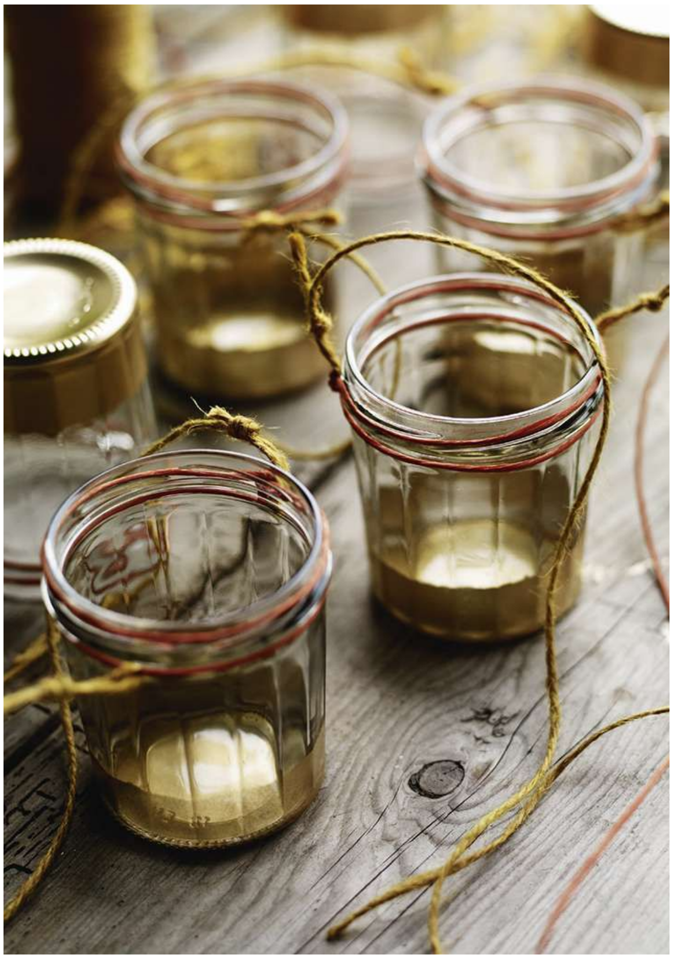
Garden chandelier (right)

The shelter provided by an arbor, a loggia or any partly covered structure in the garden is a great opportunity for making a garden chandelier. I've seen wonderful, shell-encrusted creations that would befit a 19th-century grotto; sleek, modern chandeliers, exquisite in their contrast to a rustic wooded surrounding; and simple wire and jar chandeliers, enchanting in a home-made garden pergola. The trick seems to be not to take it too seriously – gather elements on your travels, have fun and decorate at will. A candlelit chandelier, especially in the outdoors, never fails to thrill.

To make

From time to time you find old glass jars in beautiful boiled-sweet colours in junk shops and markets, but of course you can make this with new glass candle holders too. The base for this chandelier was made from two hoops of metal, with double rings (like a florist's wire wreath base, but made with 12mm wide flat steel), with drilled holes at four points on each to wire on the chain for hanging. The glass candle holders were wired so that they sat on the top of these hoops rather than hanging below, which allowed me to add foliage to the metal hoops without it catching the heat from the candles. Between the layers I hung little rings of box and dried crab apples, which in another season I can exchange for fresh flowers.





Old man's beard light catcher

While crystal chandeliers splinter light, scattering it with refraction through the facets and bevels of the crisp, cut surfaces, the fluffy seedheads of *Clematis vitalba* (known as old man's beard) catch and diffuse light in an opposite but equally magical way. Every seedhead has about 24 individual seeds, each of which has a wiry tail called a style, delicately feathered with the finest silky hairs that capture light in their gauzy grasp.

To make

To seize some of this magic for the garden, I wanted to make something that both contained lights and caught the natural light, especially at dawn and dusk. The base is a globe made out of four wire wreath rings (30.5cm diameter) with their centres cut out to leave single rings. Three of them were wired together at the top and bottom and opened out to form a globe (picture longitude lines). Wiring on the last ring around the centre (like the equator) keeps these in place. Two sets of 60 warm-white LED fairy lights, each on six metres of clear cable, were tied on to the wire frame along the ribs, then the ribs and the centre were covered in sheep's wool to hide the wire frame and the battery packs. I used florist's wire to secure the vines holding the seedheads to the base, and the wool core was dense enough to hold extra stems of old man's beard, wired individually and pushed in to fill any gaps.

Warm-white connectable LED fairy lights from Lights4fun; florist's wreath rings and wire from Floristry Supplies

Jam jar lanterns (opposite and above)

Trees offer their branches so happily for hanging jam jar lights that it would be wrong to ignore this familiar way of bringing festive lighting to the garden. However, you can maximise the effect by embellishing the jars and hanging them en masse. Pleached trees call for jars to dance along their levels like notes on a musical stave; with more natural-shaped trees, jars can be hung in waves or clusters or be scattered throughout. Just remember to light the tea-light candles before you hang the jars in the highest branches.

To make

To bring a gleam to the mix of candlelight and crab apples in the pleached trees at home, I sprayed the bottom third of the jam jars gold. By marking a line around the jar with masking tape and covering the rest with tissue, you can achieve a nice clean edge with fast-drying floral spray paint. Yellow hemp string was used for hanging the jars, kept long to avoid any chance of the branches getting caught by the flame. I tied it to orange, paper-covered wire, which encircles the rim of the jar twice, and was wound into the glass thread and tightened to prevent slipping. Extra large tea lights are ideal for giving a stronger flame, and their wider diameter keeps them positioned centrally in the jar. They will burn for eight hours so you can light them in the late afternoon and enjoy the growing drama as the night draws in. □

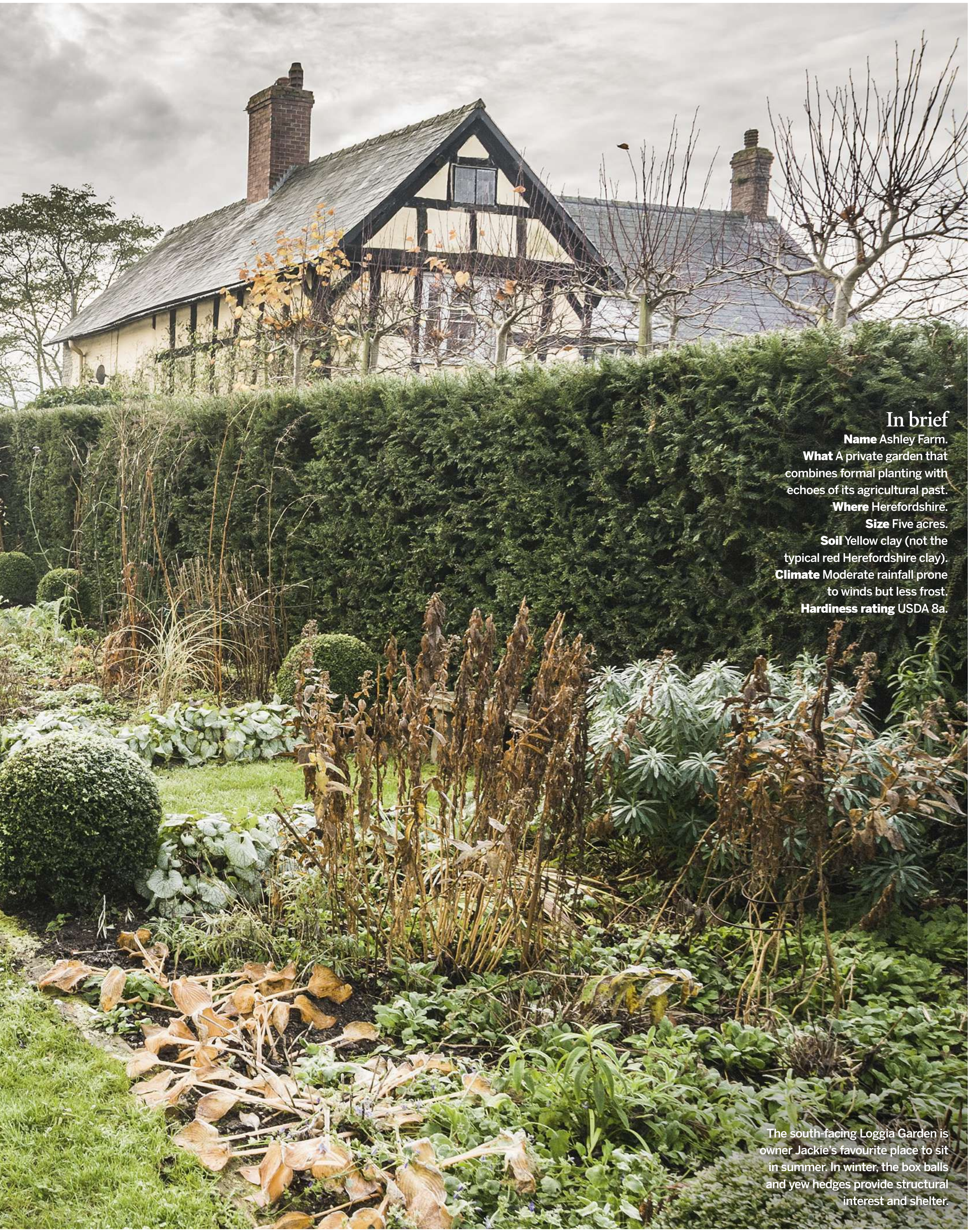
Orange, paper-covered wire from Squires Kitchen Shop; jam jars from Wares of Knutsford; spray paint from Floristry Supplies

For stockist details see page 104

Tudor grandeur

Roger and Jackie Pietroni's garden at Ashley Farm, in the Welsh Marches, is designed to reflect the history of their 16th-century farmhouse

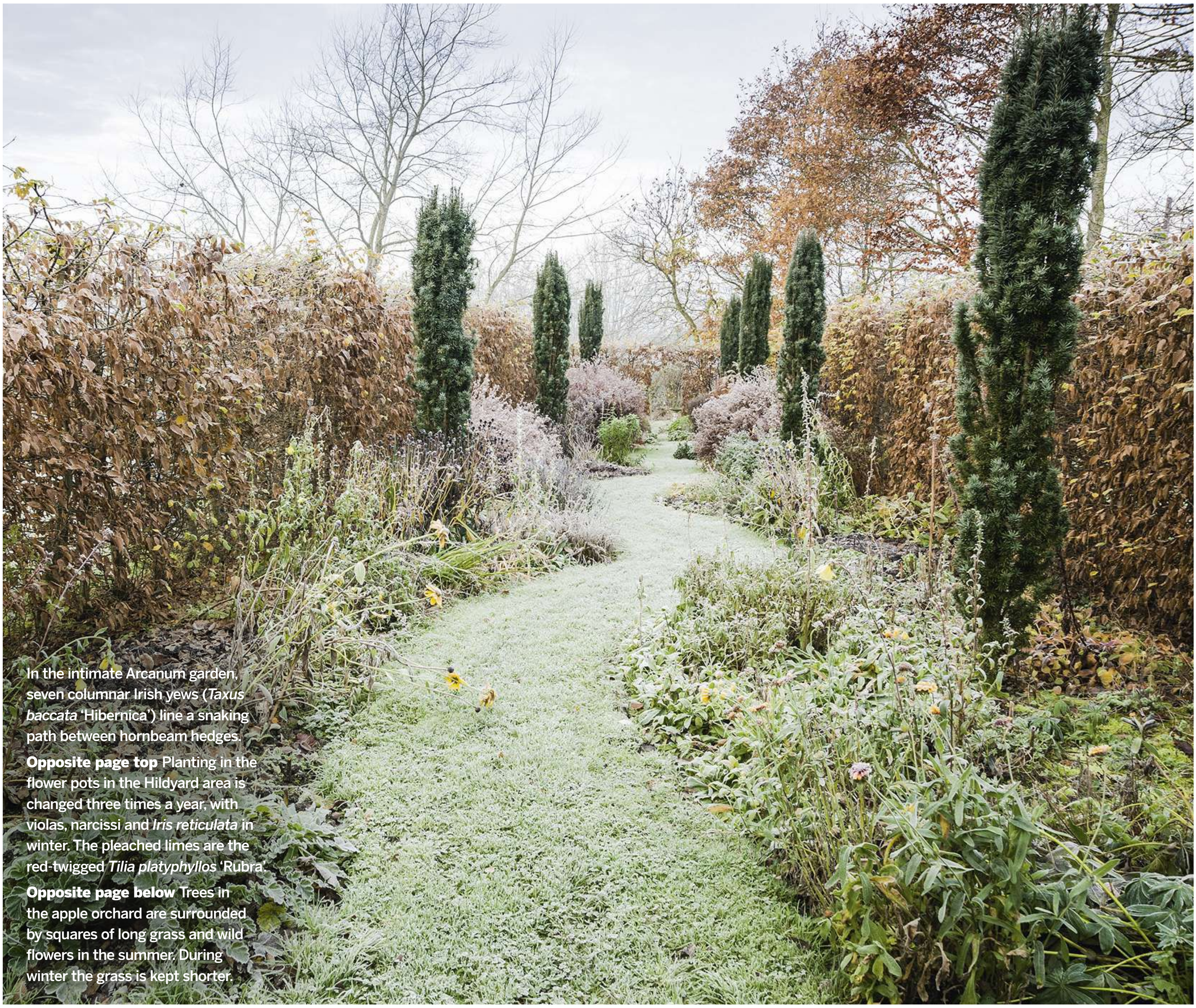
WORDS **KATHERINE SWIFT** PHOTOGRAPHS **CAROLE DRAKE**



In brief

Name Ashley Farm.
What A private garden that combines formal planting with echoes of its agricultural past.
Where Herefordshire.
Size Five acres.
Soil Yellow clay (not the typical red Herefordshire clay).
Climate Moderate rainfall prone to winds but less frost.
Hardiness rating USDA 8a.

The south-facing Loggia Garden is owner Jackie's favourite place to sit in summer. In winter, the box balls and yew hedges provide structural interest and shelter.



In the intimate Arcanum garden, seven columnar Irish yews (*Taxus baccata* 'Hibernica') line a snaking path between hornbeam hedges.

Opposite page top Planting in the flower pots in the Hildyard area is changed three times a year, with violas, narcissi and *Iris reticulata* in winter. The pleached limes are the red-twigged *Tilia platyphyllos* 'Rubra'.

Opposite page below Trees in the apple orchard are surrounded by squares of long grass and wild flowers in the summer. During winter the grass is kept shorter.

The Tudors were renowned for their extravagance, pomp and precision. Gardens, of course, were no exception – you only have to take one look at Hampton Court Palace. So when Roger and Jackie Pietroni set about creating a garden to reflect their 16th-century farmhouse in the Welsh Marches it was always going to be spectacular.

The couple started gardening here a decade ago when Roger, formerly a GP, was about to retire. They began by planting a kilometre of yew and hornbeam hedging, dividing their sloping Herefordshire site into more than 20 distinct garden areas – broad avenues and sinuous walks, tiny secret gardens and expansive formal orchards – each with its own unique flavour.

The layout was designed by Roger and Jackie's Herefordshire neighbour, the garden designer Simon Dorrell of Bryan's Ground. Herefordshire is cider and perry country and, while the original orchards surrounding the property had all but disappeared, a few old apple and pear trees had survived, and the farm's old fruit press and cider mill were still in situ when the couple arrived. Keen to pay homage to the history of their home, Roger and Jackie asked Simon for a design that would both echo the rooms of the 16th-century farmhouse and the agricultural industry once connected to it.

"I told Simon I liked surprises," says Jackie. So, close to the house, Simon's plan gave them a series of intimate interlocking spaces in which to explore ideas about the building and its past. Here they made a 17th-century knot garden, a parterre of clipped box balls, and a formal canal lined with pleached limes, each area given its own enigmatic name replete with personal significance to Roger and Jackie: Hildyard, Il Vivaio, Hardwicke, the Arcanum – the latter a truly secret garden. "Often missed entirely by visitors," says Jackie.

On the south-facing slope beyond the house they replanted the orchards: 50 apple trees (all old cultivars, many of them local) and a second, mixed orchard of pears, plums, quinces and damsons. Then they added swathes of cherries, a nuttery, and a wonderful grove of ▷

8 favourite plants for winter interest

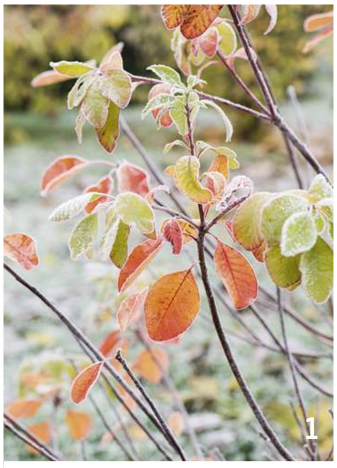
1 *Cotinus coggygria* The smoke tree, so called for its misty blooms, is a shrub with round leaves turning yellow, orange and red in autumn. 5m. RHS H5. USDA 5a-8b[†].

2 *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* The katsura tree's heart-shaped, green leaves turn an array of colours in autumn, from orange to yellow or purple and red. Leaf-fall in winter is sweet smelling, resembling candy floss. 15m. RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b.

3 *Liquidambar styraciflua* 'Lane Roberts' A wonderful sweet gum tree with large maple-like leaves turning at first red-orange then purplish black. 10m. RHS H6.

4 *Viburnum sargentii* 'Onondaga' Its maple-like leaves are maroon in spring, green in summer and turn red-orange as it gets colder. 3m. RHS H6, USDA 3b-8b.

Favourite plants continued on page 69 ▷



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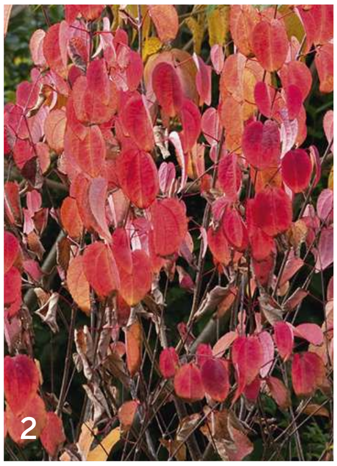

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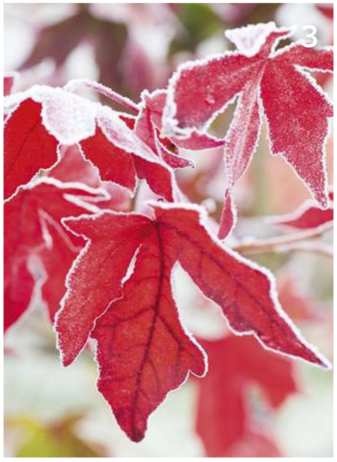

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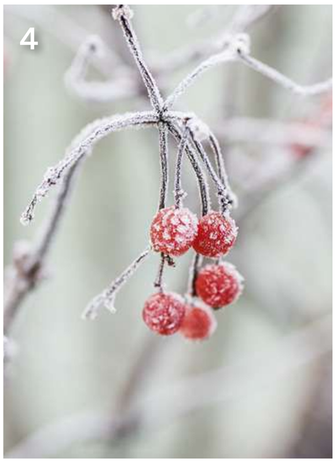


4

2 LYNN KEDDIE / GAP PHOTOS

Roger and Jackie's favourite old apples

The new apple orchard at Ashley Farm has more than 50 trees comprising old cultivars of eating and cooking apples

'Stoke Edith Pippin'
A dessert apple, yellow with an orange flush. "Almost luminous at dusk," says Roger. Originating at Stoke Edith in Herefordshire about 1870. Juicy and sweet – "a real surprise for people used to supermarket apples," he says.

'Yellow Ingestrie'
Smallish eating apple probably raised at Elton Manor, near Ludlow, in about 1800. A consistent cropper and good for juicing. "It has a distinctive drooping habit that makes it very pretty," says Roger. "We grow it as a specimen tree."

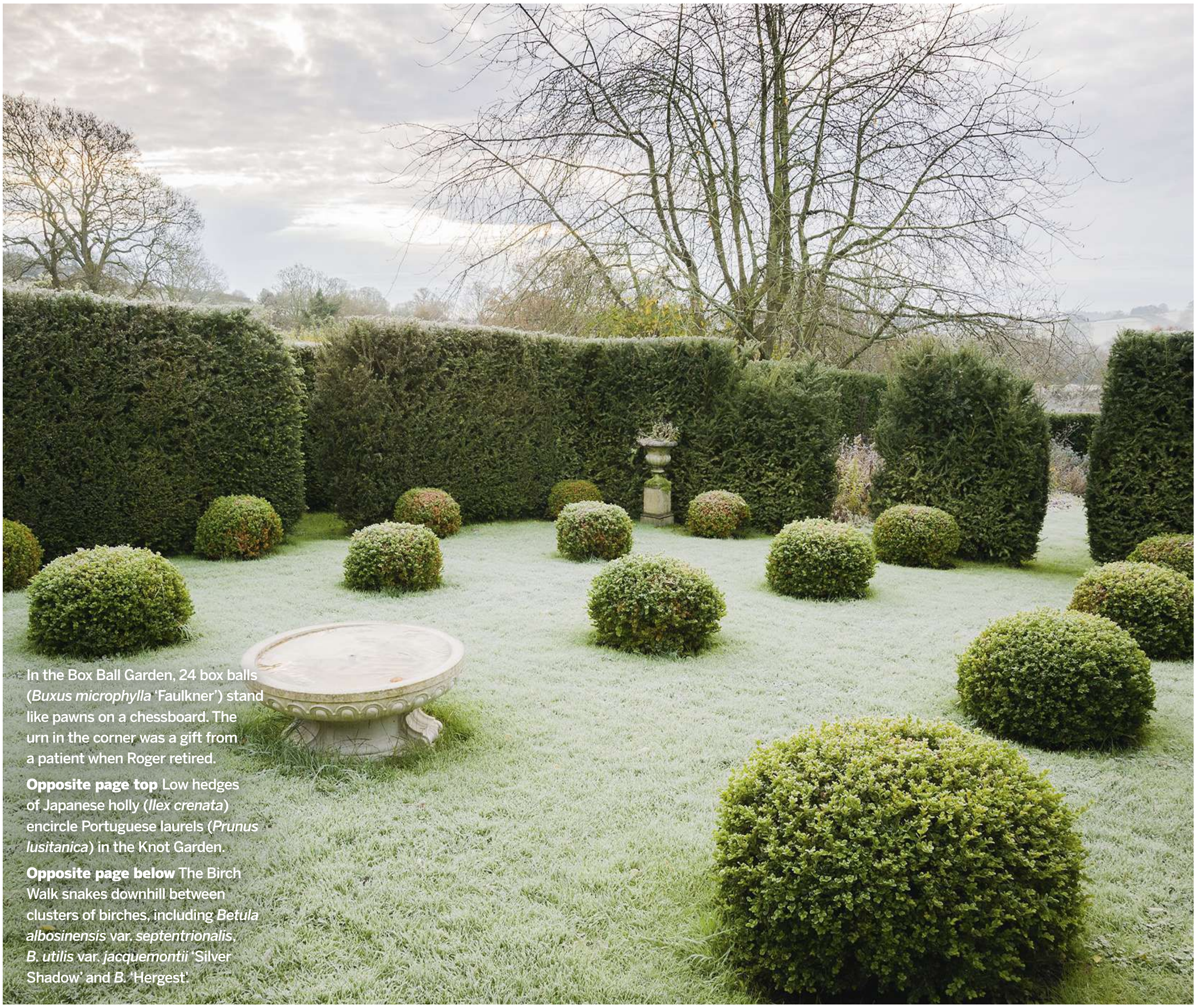
'Pitmaston Pine Apple'
Small, yellow apple with unusual rich flavour, resembling pineapples. Bred at Stoke Edith in about 1785. "A good size for small children," says Roger. "Although my granddaughter prefers the large Lincolnshire 'Peasgood's Nonsuch'."

'King's Acre Pippin'
A late-season cooking apple from Herefordshire, introduced in 1899. "It looks unpromising," says Roger. "But it is excellent in pies and crumbles."

'Herefordshire Beefing'
Originated in Herefordshire in the 1700s, deep red – "the colour of well-hung beef," says Roger. Many counties had their own 'beefings', traditionally used for drying. Excellent for baked apples and stores well.

'Ashmead's Kernel'
A Gloucestershire late-season all-rounder originating in the early 1700s, with a very distinctive pear-drop flavour. Good as a dessert apple. Stores well. AGM*

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. [†] Hardiness ratings given where available.



In the Box Ball Garden, 24 box balls (*Buxus microphylla* 'Faulkner') stand like pawns on a chessboard. The urn in the corner was a gift from a patient when Roger retired.

Opposite page top Low hedges of Japanese holly (*Ilex crenata*) encircle Portuguese laurels (*Prunus lusitanica*) in the Knot Garden.

Opposite page below The Birch Walk snakes downhill between clusters of birches, including *Betula albosinensis* var. *septentrionalis*, *B. utilis* var. *jacquemontii* 'Silver Shadow' and *B.* 'Hergest'.

▷ white-stemmed birches underplanted with shrubs chosen especially for autumn colour – each area defined by a grid of hedges.

In spring the hillside below the house is wreathed with fruit blossom – the white of pear and plum, damson and cherry; the pink and white of apples; the shell-pink of quince. In summer and autumn the rich tints of ripening fruits and leaves predominate. But it is in winter that the garden really comes into its own, when the full drama of the site reveals itself in a black and white chequerboard of hedge and frost-glazed grass, with the black trunks of the fruit trees, the russet of the hornbeam hedges, and the peeling white bark of the birches slicked with moisture or spotlit by low winter sun – the monochrome palette redolent of the imposing timber-framed house standing within it all.

It hasn't all been plain sailing. Bridging the area between the smaller, more formal areas and the wider, open landscape of the orchards, is the Old Garden, a relic of a garden made by a previous owner. "I used to wonder why all the plants in the garden were standards," says Jackie. "Standard lavenders, standard camellias, standard roses. But then I realised. Rabbits." The whole five-acre plot has had to be rabbit proofed. And not all the yews thrived: parts of the garden were found to be on heavy clay and an underground stream was discovered, flowing across the hillside – both conditions inimical to yew. Initially, Roger and Jackie replanted with more yews, on raised mounds to aid drainage. When these too failed, they switched to hornbeam. "We learn from our mistakes," they say.

Then, in 2010, all the box hedging in the Knot Garden succumbed to box blight. "It was like a bereavement," says Roger. He describes how he went through all the stages of denial, anger, bargaining and depression, minutely researching the subject and seeking advice from others suffering from the same affliction, before finally accepting the inevitable. The box has now been dug out and replaced with Japanese holly (*Ilex crenata*). Dwarf box (*Buxus sempervirens* 'Suffruticosa'), the type of box traditionally used for knot gardens and parterres, is particularly susceptible to box blight. Happily, the

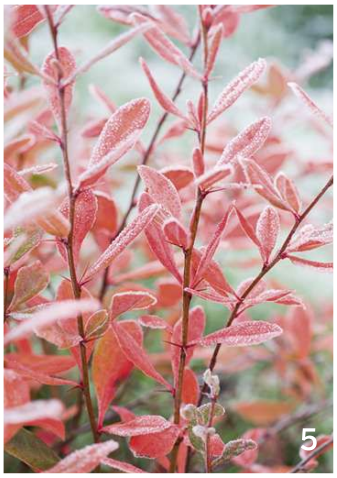
8 favourite plants for winter interest

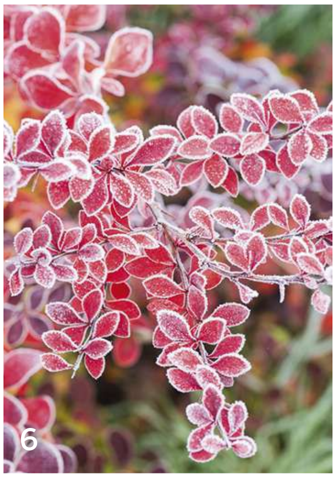
5 ***Berberis sieboldii*** This suckering shrub has racemes of lemon-yellow flowers in spring and bright-red berries later. Leaves turn a brilliant scarlet in autumn. 1.2m.

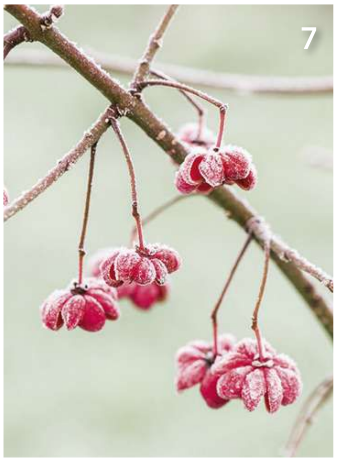
6 ***Berberis thunbergii* f. *atropurpurea*** Known for its dark-purple-bronze foliage, it also has orange-red berries in winter. 1.5m. RHS H7, USDA 3a-10b.

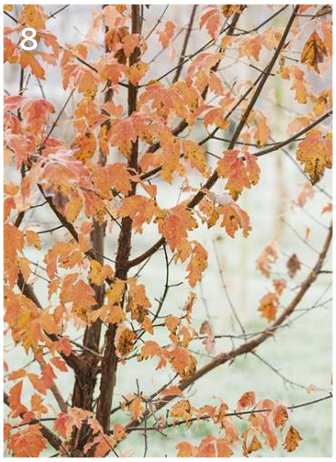
7 ***Euonymus europaeus* 'Red Cascade'** This wonderful shrub has crimson flowers that hang down like Chinese lanterns, opening to reveal vivid orange seeds. Oval leaves turn from dark green to deep red in autumn. 3m. RHS H5.

8 ***Acer griseum*** Chinese paperbark maple, which is slow to leaf in spring but hangs on to striking scarlet colour leaves until late November. 10m. RHS H5.









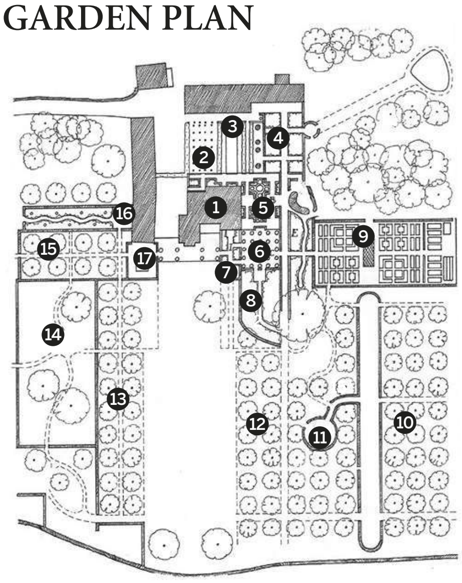
other species of box in the garden seem to have escaped harm. "So far so good," Roger says brightly.

Roger's current project is to improve the diversity of wild flowers in the orchards: miniature wild-flower meadows have been created beneath each apple tree, where the semi-parasite yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) has been introduced to suppress the vigour of the coarse grasses. As I prepare to ask about any future plans for the garden, Roger is already gazing dreamily over my shoulder at a field to the north of the house. "Another wild-flower meadow there?" He turns to Jackie. "What do you think?" ☐

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Ashley Farm, Stansbatch, Herefordshire HR6 9LN.
Tel 01544 267405.
Website ashleyfarm.net
Open By appointment only.

GARDEN PLAN



SIMON DORRELL

1	House
2	Hildyard
3	Formal canal
4	Loggia Garden
5	Knot Garden
6	Box Ball Garden
7	Hardwicke
8	Old Garden
9	Kitchen Garden
10	Apple Orchard
11	Sacred Glade
12	Rusthall
13	Cherry Walk
14	Perry Orchard
15	Cherry Orchard
16	Arcanum
17	Il Vivaio

N

Into the wilderness

Photographer Annette Lepple has tamed a wild garden in the rugged Aveyron landscape in southern France

WORDS **JOHN HOYLAND** PHOTOGRAPHS **ANNETTE LEPPLE / GAP PHOTOS**

In brief

Name Mas de Béty.
What A photographer's garden with informal planting in several distinct areas.
Where Aveyron region of southern France.
Size One acre.
Soil Rocky soil over clay.
Climate Hot summers with mild, wet winters. The garden is 400m above sea level.
Hardiness rating USDA 8a.

The remaining golden leaves of a lime tree echo the honey colour of Annette Lepple's stone house. During winter, the garden seems to float in the clouds as the mist hangs in the valley below.

The gravel terrace catches the winter sun, filtered through the framework of a weeping willow.

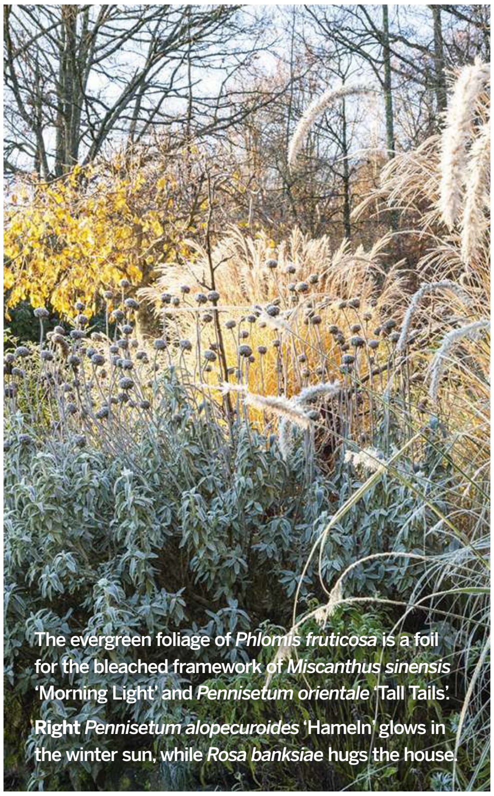
I had been warned that the road to the garden was a roller coaster of a ride but I was still unprepared for the vertiginous up and downs of the lane that would finally bring me to Annette Lepple's house deep in the French countryside and to the reward of breathtaking views from her garden.

Photographer and designer Annette and her husband George bought their house in Aveyron, a part of southern France known for its dramatic gorges and soaring hilltop villages, a little over three years ago. The stone house, clinging to the side of a hill, has spectacular vistas but when the couple first arrived the land around was thick with brambles and only a neglected orchard suggested it might once have been a garden. "Despite this, it was love at first sight, a *coup de foudre*," says Annette. "The place sang to me. Even though it was all overgrown I knew it was magical." So great was her enthusiasm that before the sale had even been formalised, Annette had begun bringing down trailer-loads of plants from their garden in Switzerland – species roses, shrubs and grasses – for the garden she knew she wanted to create.

Since then, with constant hard work, she and George have, in an incredibly short space of time, made a garden that feels as if it has always been there. Invoking a range of moods, a series of different ▷

"It was love at first sight, a coup de foudre,*" says Annette. "The place sang to me. Even though it was all overgrown I knew it was magical."*

The skeletal remains of *Verbena bonariensis*, miscanthus, phlomis and other herbaceous perennials bring structure and drama into the garden during winter.



The evergreen foliage of *Phlomis fruticosa* is a foil for the bleached framework of *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Morning Light' and *Pennisetum orientale* 'Tall Tails'.

Right *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Hameln' glows in the winter sun, while *Rosa banksiae* hugs the house.

Grey winter days are brightened by the fat tomato-red hips of Rosa rugosa *and the polished orange hips of* Rosa moyesii

▷ areas meander across the hillside, each loosely connected to its neighbour but having its own distinct character and atmosphere. "I don't like the formality of heavily defined separate garden 'rooms', and that style is not particularly suited to this rugged wild landscape," explains Annette.

The solidity of the stone house is softened with a fringe of grasses, mainly miscanthus and pennisetum, interplanted with perennials and shrub roses. Grass paths lead to a pergola covered with climbing roses and underplanted with a border of mainly yellow-flowered perennials. The planting is loose and airy: "I am a romantic, wild at heart, and my planting schemes reflect that," says Annette. Away from the exuberance of the planting, George has built a secluded terrace from stone recovered from the ruins of farm buildings and erected a pavilion from recycled materials where the couple can sit quietly and admire the landscape.

The old, gnarled fruit trees in the orchard have been rejuvenated and a shrubbery has been planted, which Annette prunes to echo the contours of the distant hills. A large area of the garden has been left as wild meadow and a dew pond enlarged to make a home for frogs and toads. "The first spring we were here we were excited to see that the meadow area was full of hundreds of wild orchids, so we have left it untouched and let our two mules graze it after the orchids have set seed," says Annette.

Roses, one of Annette's favourite flowers, are everywhere throughout the garden. She prefers long-flowering cultivars, such as *Rosa* The Generous Gardener (='Ausdrawn'), which will produce flowers during mild winters, and those with showy hips. Grey winter days are brightened by the fat tomato-red hips of *Rosa rugosa* and the polished orange hips of *Rosa moyesii*, which has the reputation for reliably producing an abundant crop.

The layers of woodland, hill and valley that unfold from the garden create a stunning panorama, crowned in the far distance by the hilltop village of Najac, officially classified as one of the most beautiful villages in France. In winter the village and surrounding hills hover magically above low-lying cloud. For Annette, the view of the village is so important that she doesn't want to waste it all at once and has designed the garden in such a way that sometimes the village is veiled, and sometimes framed between trees and shrubs. "As a photographer I look at scenes and I see pictures. I frame garden views as I would a picture," she says.

"We moved to this part of France for the quality of the light and for the sunshine. I hate winter – I'm always impatient for it to end and the warmth to return. But in winter you can still find beautiful things to look at in the garden and this cheers me up." Annette photographs her garden throughout the seasons. "I'm not constantly taking pictures," she says. "But I am continually delighted and inspired by the garden, even in winter. Occasionally, it makes me think winter might not be so bad after all." □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Mas de Béty, 12270 Najac, France.
Website personal-eden.com
Open By appointment only.

6 of Annette's favourite winter plants

1 *Muhlenbergia capillaris*
From late summer until the end of autumn this is a frothy dome of pink-hued panicles. It needs very good drainage to survive wet winters. 1m. RHS H4, USDA 8b-9[†].

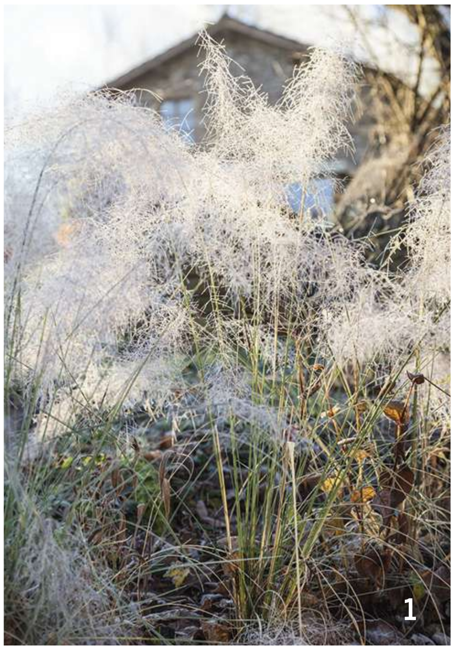
2 *Mahonia japonica*
In very cold weather the shrub's young foliage becomes burnished with a coppery sheen. Slender, sulphur-yellow flowers that have a sweet scent appear from November to February. 2m. AGM*. RHS H5, USDA 7b-8a.

3 *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Tom Thumb'
A compact, evergreen shrub with small, rounded, rippled leaves that are a distinctive dark-purple colour. It will grow to 1m tall but Annette keeps hers pruned low. 1m. RHS H4, USDA 8b-9a.

4 *Rosa* 'Vesuvius'
A low-growing hybrid tea rose with single, red flowers that have a strong spicy perfume. It is a prolific flowerer and will even produce flowers during mild spells in the winter. 90cm. RHS H5, USDA 7b-8a.

5 *Rosa* 'The Fairy'
A tough, disease-resistant shrub rose that has sprays of soft pink flowers throughout the summer. It has an arching habit that helps display the clusters of small red hips that form in the autumn. 90cm. RHS H6, USDA 6b-7a.

6 *Hydrangea aspera* subsp. *sargentiana*
During the summer this spectacular shrub has flat, dark-purple flower heads that are surrounded by a rim of white petals. The flowers transform in winter into diaphanous reminders of their former selves. 3m. RHS H6, USDA 6b-7a.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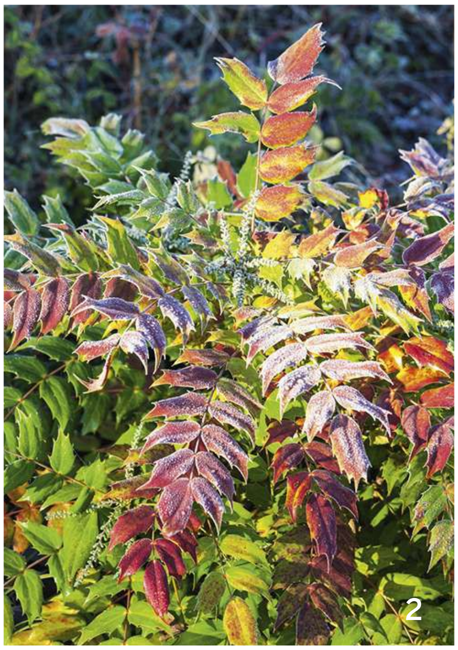
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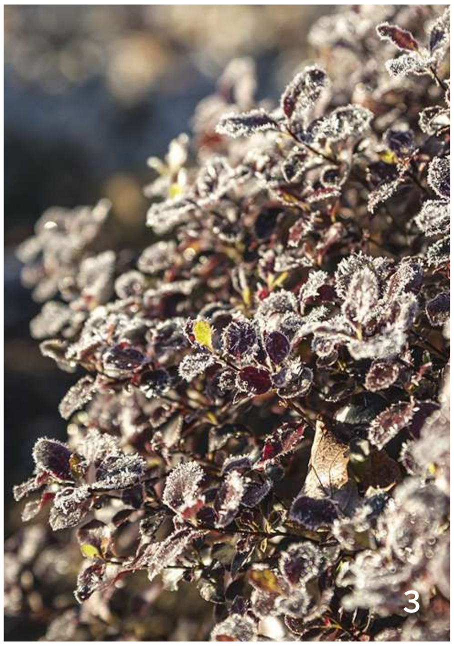
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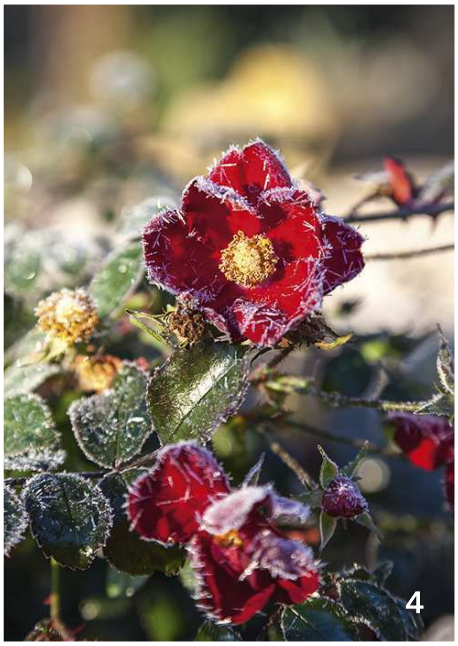
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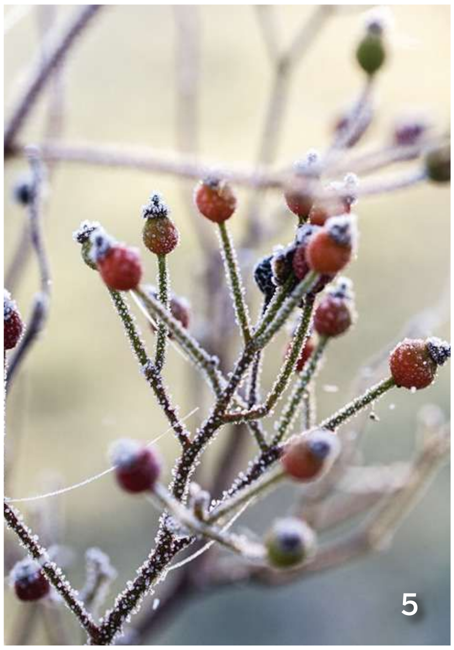
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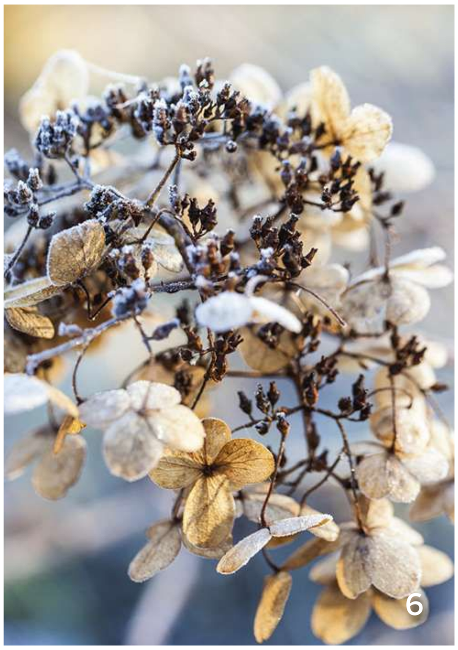
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*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
[†]Hardiness ratings given where available.

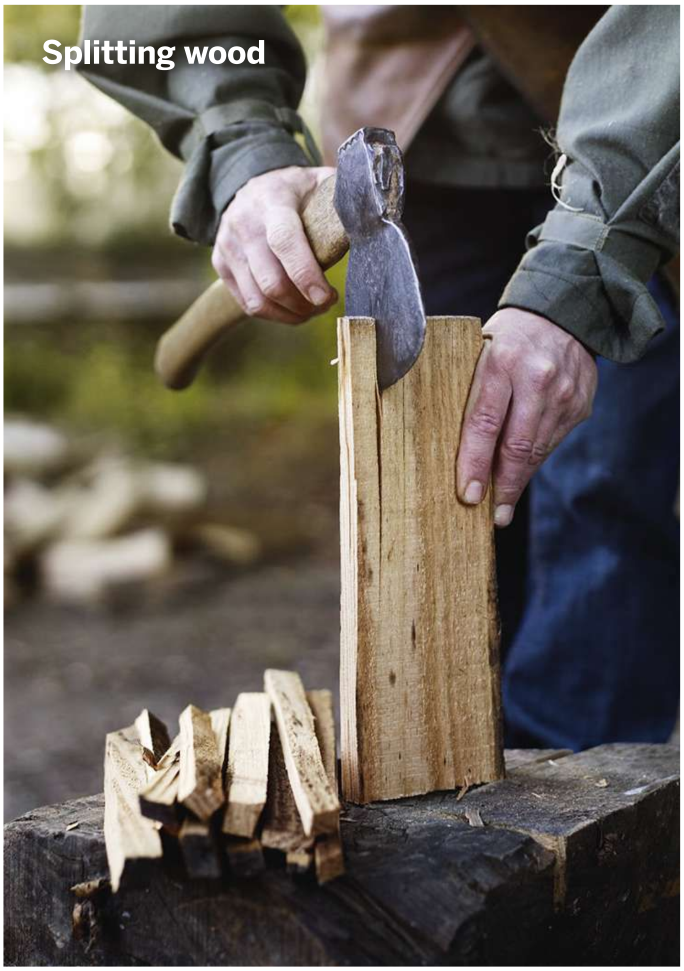
The fire starter

How to make the perfect fire? It's down to the correct wood, well-stacked logs and good slithers of kindling

WORDS **LOUISE ALLEN** PHOTOGRAPHS **ANDREW MONTGOMERY**

How to stack

- Keep your logs as dry as possible, and do everything you can to keep them from getting wet or damp.
- Never stack your logs on the ground as your firewood needs constant air circulation. An old pallet makes an ideal base.
- Make sure your logs are under cover but open on one side. This is particularly important if you use polythene to cover your logs as they need to breathe to avoid sweating.
- When building the stack, start at the outer edge and work inwards, keeping the logs level, and avoid sloping in or out. Corners should be created with one layer being laid at 90 degrees to the next, similar to the brickwork on the corner of a house.



On a cold winter day, there's nothing more welcoming than the sight of an open fire, flames flickering merrily and radiating a golden heat. However, it's important to get the best from your fire, and the secret is good firewood. Burn the wrong wood that has been poorly seasoned and the results can be frustratingly disappointing. The late, great gardener Valerie Finnis was so passionate about fires that she kept a stash of copies of *The Firewood Poem* by Lady Celia Congreve (see below) next to her hearth, liberally distributing it to friends who came to visit. We keep a copy in the candle box next to our fireplace, reaching for it when in doubt.

As with so much in life, your fire will only be as good as the ingredients you use. We begin preparing for winter in spring, at around the time we stop lighting the fire in our cottage. It's the perfect time to stack the store with logs, and allows plenty of time for them to dry out and season over the course of the summer months. We are then all set for the first spell of cold weather in late autumn and the start of the fire-lighting season.

The Firewood Poem by Lady Celia Congreve (1930)

Beechwood fires are bright and clear
If the logs are kept a year,
Chestnut's only good they say,
If for logs 'tis laid away.
Make a fire of Elder tree,
Death within your house will be;
But ash new or ash old,
Is fit for a queen with crown of gold

Birch and fir logs burn too fast
Blaze up bright and do not last,
it is by the Irish said
Hawthorn bakes the sweetest bread.
Elm wood burns like churchyard mould,
E'en the very flames are cold
But ash green or ash brown
Is fit for a queen with golden crown

Poplar gives a bitter smoke,
Fills your eyes and makes you choke,
Apple wood will scent your room
Pear wood smells like flowers in bloom
Oaken logs, if dry and old
keep away the winter's cold
But ash wet or ash dry
a king shall warm his slippers by.

How to make kindling

- **Use a soft wood timber,** such as pine, to make your kindling, as the resinous character makes it much easier for lighting fires. Kindling runs out relatively quickly, so it's always best to prepare a large bucketful all at once rather than make only enough for a single fire.
- **Use a smaller kindling axe or a chopper,** as you will have more control when splitting small pieces of wood. Wedge the axe into the timber and lift both together before striking the chopping block – this is less likely to cause an injury.
- **When chopping the wood,** try to create a variety of sizes, from very small pieces upwards. The smaller the piece of kindling, the bigger its surface area so the fire will catch more easily, but it is also important to have intermediate-sized pieces. The length of your kindling will be dictated by the size of your fire.
- **Don't forget that in any pile of logs** there will inevitably be a good assortment of twigs, chippings and bark – hold on to these, as they will supplement your home-made kindling.

How to split logs

- Use a good chopping block when splitting wood. It needs to measure at least 40cm x 40cm and should come up to the height of your knee. A particularly knotty chunk of wood also makes a good block as it will withstand blows from the axe.
- Always use a good splitting axe or maul to split the wood, cutting along rather than across the grain of the wood as this is the point of least resistance. Don't forget that green timber splits more easily than seasoned wood.
- Logs are ready for burning when they have lost as much moisture as possible. A seasoned piece of wood usually loses up to half its weight. As you split wood, remember the size of the logs that you require; there is nothing more frustrating than finding your logs are too big for your stove or fire basket.
- If you are hewing large rings of wood, it is much easier to split chunks off around the circumference than attempt to chop the log in half, though do accept that some knotty bits of timber will never split, no matter how hard you try.

Which woods to burn

1 Ash
Ash produces a steady flame with a good heat and burns well even when green. It will burn successfully on its own, so does not need to be burned in a mix of different species. Traditionally said to be one of the best woods for burning.

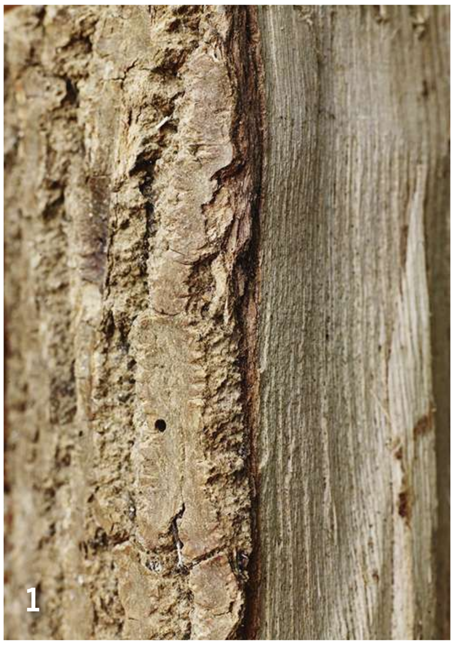
2 Oak
Oak is the slowest timber to season, at approximately 2.5cm a year and ideally should be seasoned for a minimum of two years. Because of its density, it is slow to burn and is best used in a mix of faster-burning logs. It can help to keep the fire going at night if required.

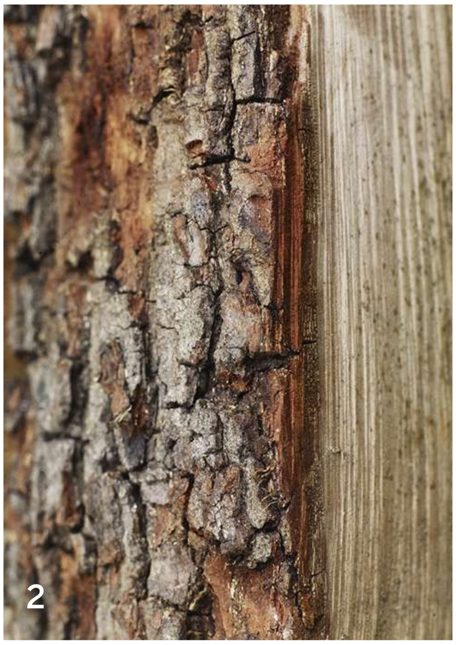
3 Birch
Birch makes excellent firewood, producing a good heat, although it burns relatively quickly, so it's best to use it in a mix of slower-burning woods, such as elm or oak. Will burn unseasoned although the sap can cause a build up of deposits in the flue. The bark can be peeled off and used as a natural firelighter.

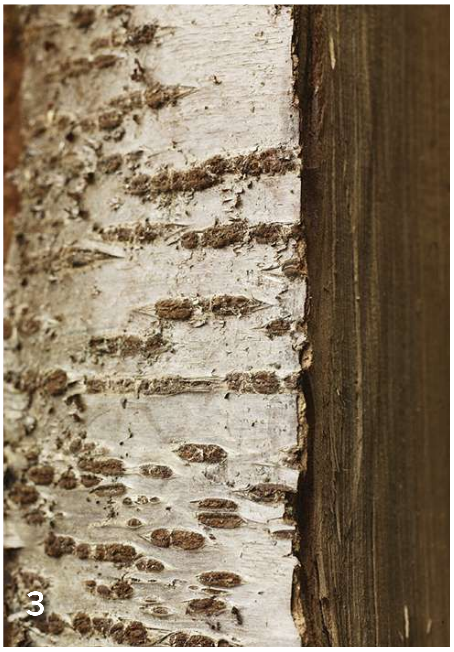
4 Beech
Beech is a superb burning wood, although it has a high water content so needs to be dried well; ideally, it should be seasoned for three years before use. It does not need to be burned in a mix.

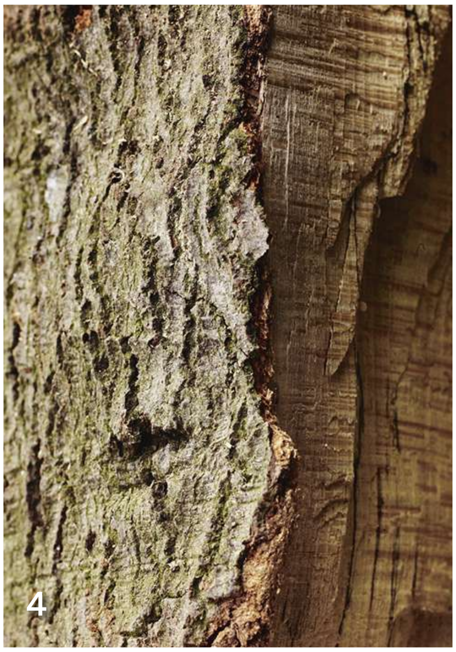
5 Cherry
Cherry burns slowly with a good heat output and gives off a lovely aroma. Needs to be well seasoned, although strips of the bark can also be used as natural firelighters.

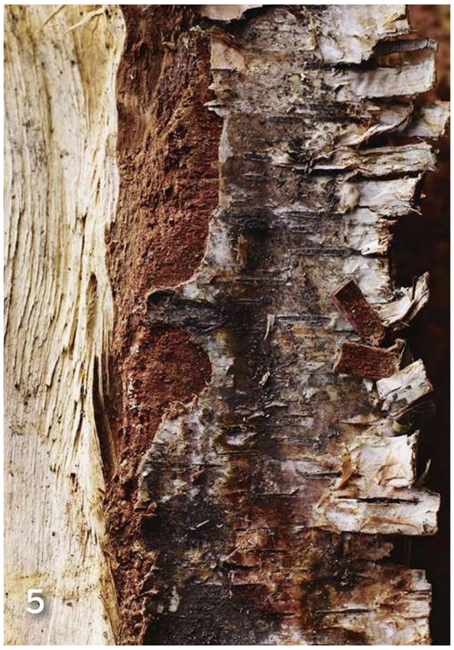
6 Sycamore
Sycamore burns well when seasoned with a moderate heat output. It seasons very quickly, usually within just one year.

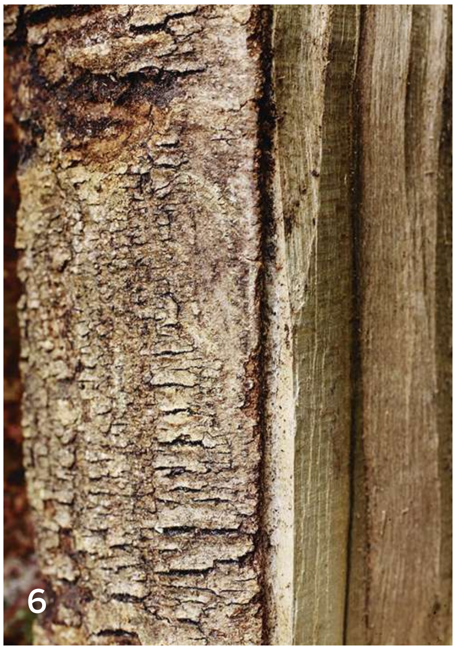


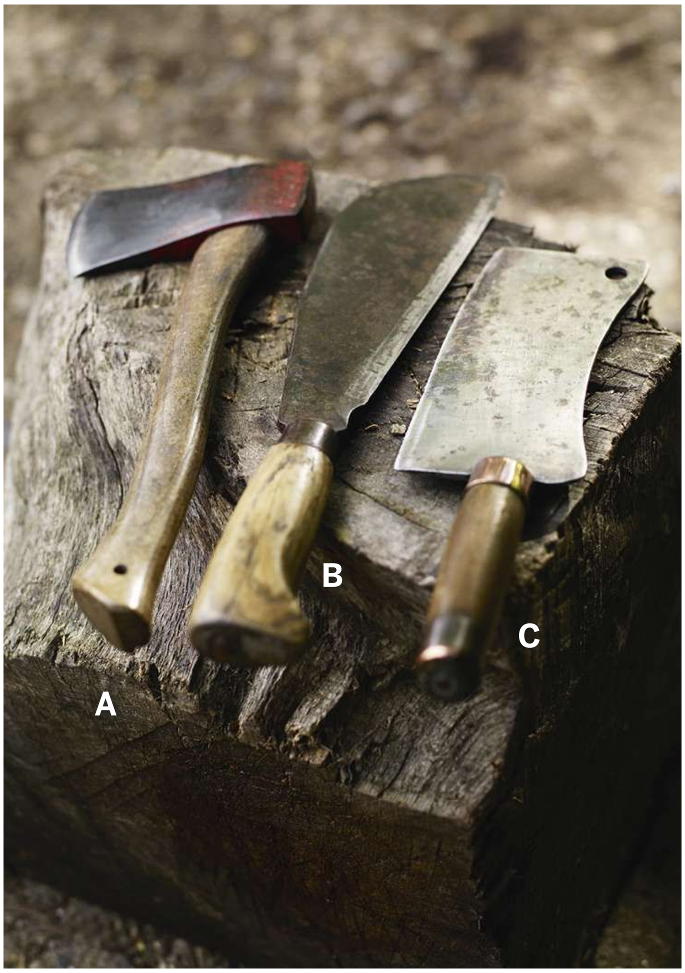












Tools for the trade

It's said that a fire will warm you twice – once when you chop the wood and once when you burn it, but using the correct tool will make the job of chopping it much easier.

Vintage tool suppliers **Garden & Wood** (01844 279170, gardenandwood.co.uk), **The Old Tool Store** (01507 525697, oldtoolstore.co.uk) and **Timeless Tools** (timelesstools.co.uk) are all good sources of good-looking, well-functioning equipment.

A This small American pattern kindling axe is a handy size for cleaving small pieces of wood and will give you more control.
B The straight-edged billhook (made by Elwell) is a traditional cutting tool used for a variety of jobs and is perfect for splitting wood.
C An old butcher's meat cleaver is not your conventional woodsman's tool but is surprisingly good for chopping kindling.

Tips for the perfect fire

Make sure your logs are dry and fully seasoned before you bring them indoors and use a good mix of species, as they will burn at different rates. Having a plentiful supply of components to hand is essential, especially on a cold, wet night. We have an old bushel next to the fire that we keep full of kindling wood so that it's ready for use at a moment's notice.

1 Start with a good layer of loosely rolled balls of newspaper – avoid weekend supplements as many seem to be almost fireproof.
2 Add a good handful of kindling, small pieces first and larger pieces last. Try not to lay all the pieces in the same direction.
3 Finish with the logs. The first to go on should be smaller in size, ending with the largest.
4 Light the paper, sit back, watch the fire roar into life and enjoy the warming glow.

Useful information

A GOOD BOOK

Learn more about splitting logs, stacking and seasoning in *Norwegian Wood: Chopping, Stacking, and Drying Wood the Scandinavian Way* by Lars Mytting (MacLehose Press, £20). To buy at discounted price of £18, see page 102

FINDING A SUPPLIER

If you're not fortunate enough to have your own supply of firewood, a good supplier is essential. A personal recommendation is definitely best. Remember to always request seasoned wood and order in spring ready for the winter rather than waiting until the first cold snap in autumn when it will be in high demand. If you struggle to find a local supplier, companies such as **Certainly Wood** (0845 901 1679, certainlywood.co.uk), **Logs Direct** (01524 812476, logsdirect.co.uk) and **Lakeland Logs** (01768 895204, lakelandlogs.co.uk) deliver wood and fire-burning essentials nationwide.

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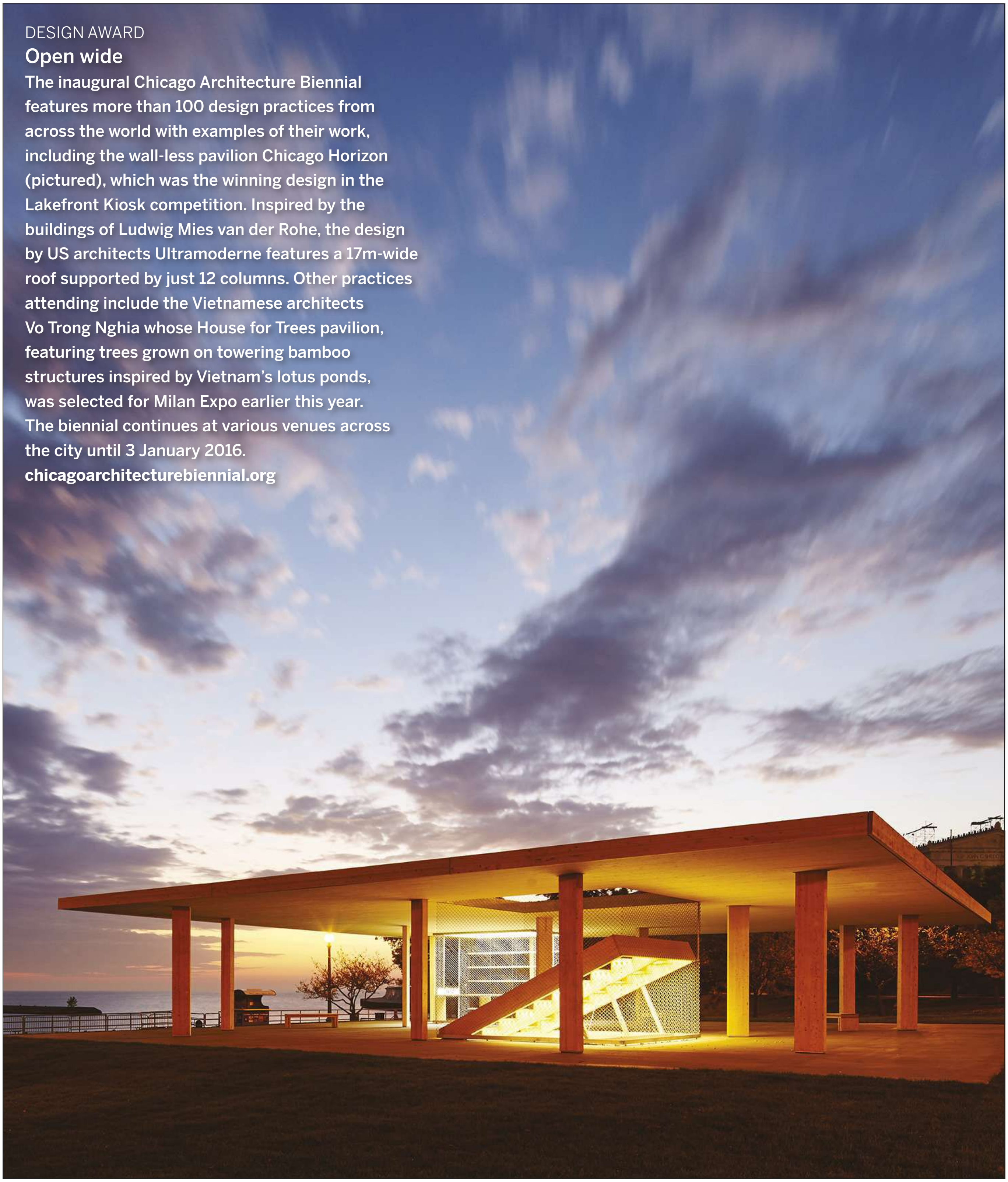

DESIGN AWARD

Open wide

The inaugural Chicago Architecture Biennial features more than 100 design practices from across the world with examples of their work, including the wall-less pavilion Chicago Horizon (pictured), which was the winning design in the Lakefront Kiosk competition. Inspired by the buildings of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the design by US architects Ultramoderne features a 17m-wide roof supported by just 12 columns. Other practices attending include the Vietnamese architects Vo Trong Nghia whose House for Trees pavilion, featuring trees grown on towering bamboo structures inspired by Vietnam's lotus ponds, was selected for Milan Expo earlier this year. The biennial continues at various venues across the city until 3 January 2016. **chicagoarchitecturebiennial.org**

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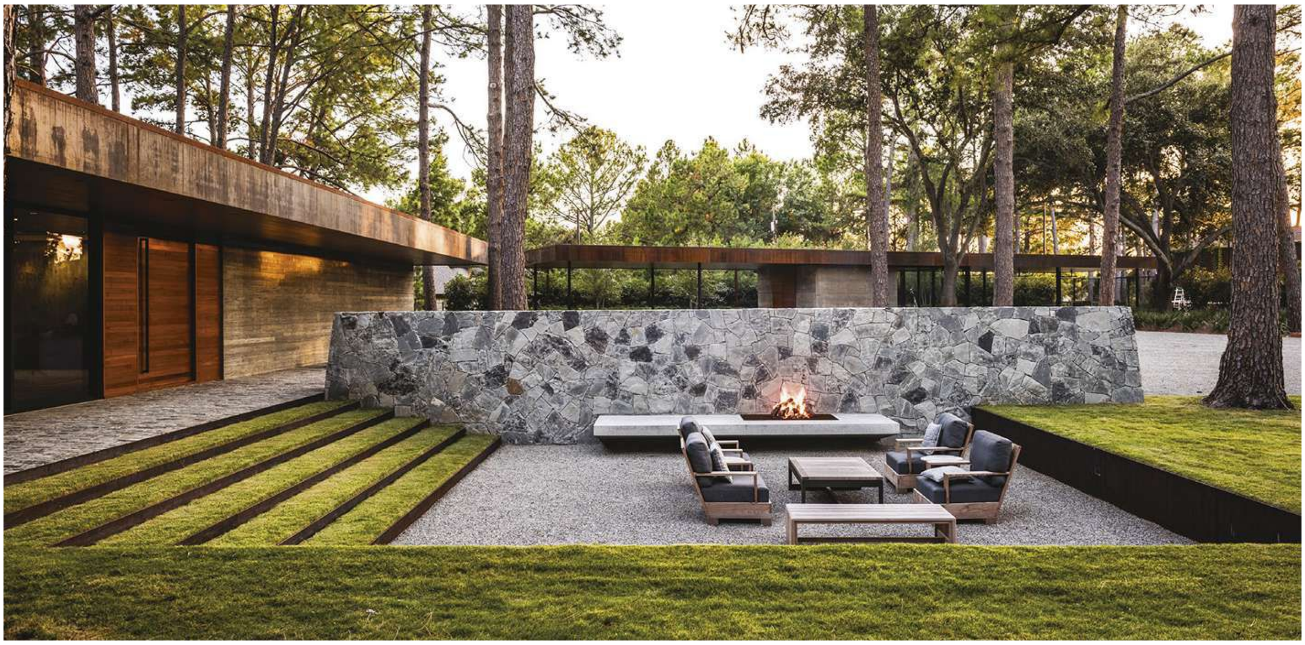
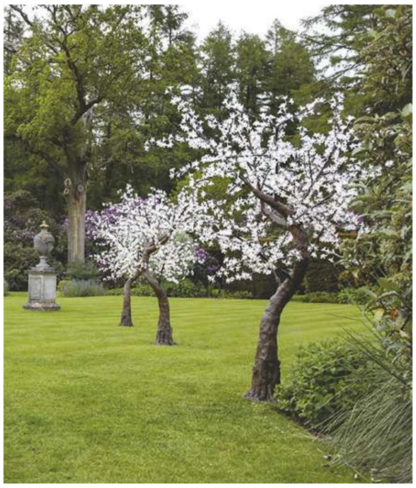


LANDSCAPE AWARD

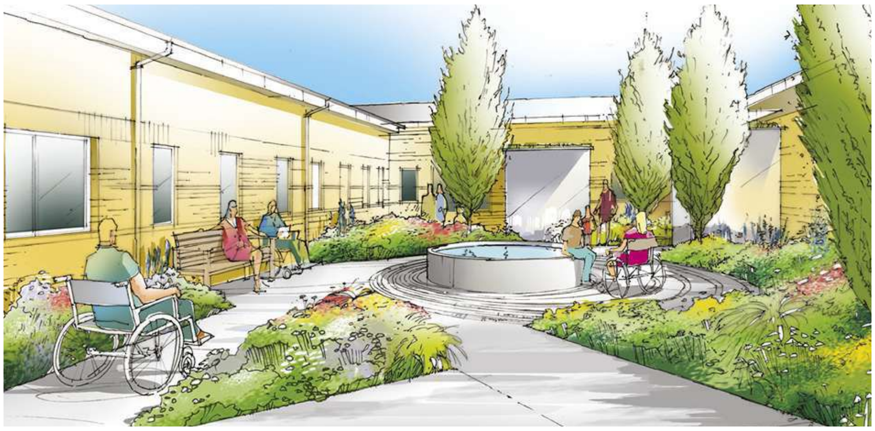
Amid the trees

A sensitive landscaping scheme that embraces the wooded lakeside site of a seven-acre private property in Trinidad, Texas, has won the Award of Excellence in the Residential Design Category of this year's ASLA Professional Awards. Landscape Architects Hocker Design Group used a restrained palette of materials, including stone, wood, concrete and weathered steel, to blend the scheme into its surroundings. **asla.org**



A TOUCH OF MAGIC

Add some sparkle to your winter garden in the shape of a life-like cherry or maple tree with LED lights, from Twilight Trees. Also suitable for indoor use, the trees are available in four different sizes, starting at 1.5m, and a range of colours, with prices from £545 plus delivery. twilight-trees.com



ROBERT YU

CHARITY GARDEN

Sanctuary for spinal patients

A second Horatio's Garden for spinal treatment patients has been designed by James Alexander-Sinclair, and is due to be built in Glasgow in the new year. It's designed as a series of linked gardens, featuring planting that attracts wildlife, a children's play area, a productive area, a courtyard garden with a circular pool, and sheltered spaces for patients, staff and visitors to enjoy the garden in all weathers. **horatiosgarden.org.uk**

CITY ROOF TERRACE

Fresh thinking

Corian, a material normally used for interior fittings, has been chosen by landscape architects Gustafson Porter to clad the raised planters on the contemporary roof terrace of the central London office development at One New Ludgate. Its flexibility enabled the shaping of a 105m-long bench that seamlessly emerges from one of the planters. The undulating profile of the soil creates herbaceous planting at different heights without obscuring the views.

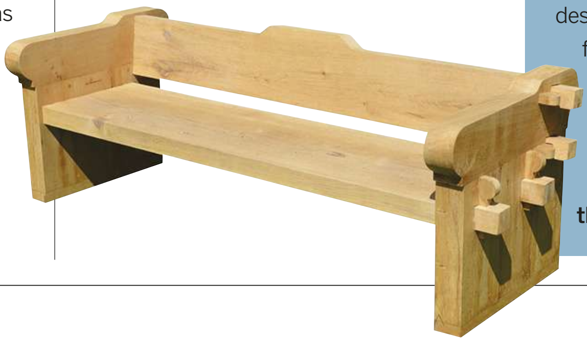
LIVING WALL

Green screen

A trial section of green wall that is sustained only by rainwater has been such a success that it has been tripled in length, and now covers a 30m section of a building near London Bridge. The system, created by Treebox, harvests enough rainwater in storage tanks to sustain the wall for up to six weeks. Key plants include *Asplenium* and *Polystichum* ferns, sedges, sweet box and geraniums. **treebox.co.uk**

TAKE A PEW

Sit stylishly on the Quercus Robur Seat, an English oak bench made in a traditional manner with keyed mortise and tenon joints. It is the first in a new range of handcrafted furniture built by Architectural Heritage in Gloucestershire using 12-year-old, air-dried timber. The design draws inspiration from the Cotswold school of Arts and Crafts furniture. £4,560. Tel 01386 584414, architectural-heritage.co.uk



Notebook

- Designer Marcus Barnett puts contemporary British garden design into perspective in a talk entitled **The Glory of the Garden** at the V&A, London, on 1 December. 6.30-7.30pm; tickets £10, concessions £7. To book, call 020 7942 2211 or visit **vam.ac.uk/whatson**
- Get up to date on affordable drainage solutions for landscape projects large and small with expert Mark Gregory on the **London College of Garden Design**'s one-day course, held at the Ibis Styles hotel, Crewe, on 3 December. Cost £75. Tel 01483 762955, **lcgd.org.uk**
- Looking for the perfect present for a gardener who has everything? The one-day introduction to garden design at London's **KLC School of Design**, would make a most generous Christmas gift. Cost £185, 6 May 2016, Hampton Court Palace. **klc.co.uk**
- Garden designer Jo Thompson was selected to join more than 450 women being celebrated for their achievements and contribution to society at this year's **Women of the Year** awards ceremony. She said, "I would like to see more women showcasing their talents in events like the RHS Chelsea Flower Show."
- The Chelsea gold medal-winning artisan garden designed by **Sarah Eberle** for The Haven breast cancer charity is being recreated at the charity's new centre in Titchfield, Hampshire. **thehaven.org.uk**

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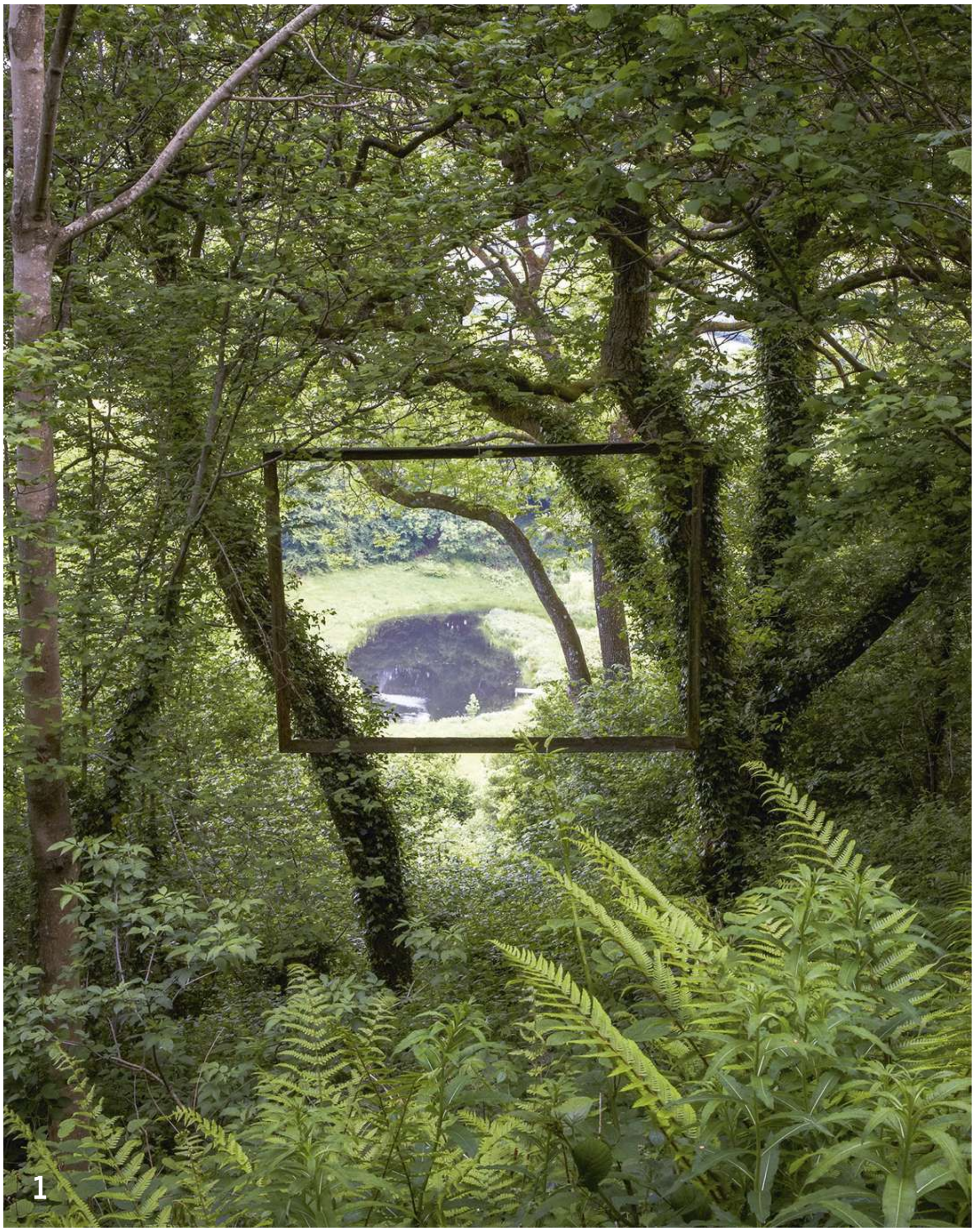
1 Freeze frame

Accidently stumbling across a distant view or being offered the chance to take a peep into another garden room invariably creates a frisson of excitement in a garden. Doorways or windows cut into walls or hedges are a wonderful way of achieving this, but sometimes simply framing a view with trees can create a dramatic reveal. When the frame or view is surprising or unexpected, the pleasure is even greater. In their garden The Pant, near Abergavenny, Camilla and Jeremy Swift have hung a frame high within the trees to offer a tantalising glimpse of another garden episode – a lakeside meadow in the valley below.



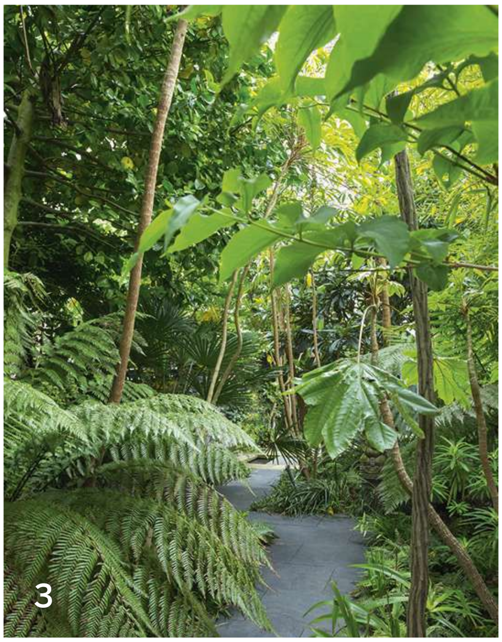
BRITT WILLOUGHBY DYER

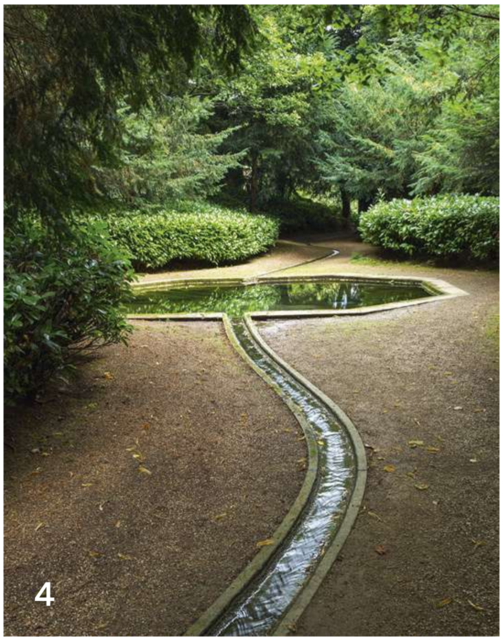
Sarah Price is one of the UK's most sought-after garden designers who won worldwide recognition for her designs for the 2012 Olympic Park.

The importance of transitions in a garden

Like a good film, a truly immersive garden has atmosphere and intrigue, created in part by movement between its different spaces

WORDS SARAH PRICE





3 MARIANNE MAJERUS / DESIGN: DECLAN BUCKLEY 4 MARIANNE MAJERUS, ROUSHAM HOUSE, OXFORDSHIRE, DESIGN WILLIAM KENT

2 Natural boundary

In their Pembrokeshire garden, Ty Glas, Neti de Mestre and Hugo Colville have created features, such as this island and pool, out of subtle changes in the topography. They've cleverly blurred boundaries between the garden and the landscape to give visitors an immersive experience.

3 Urban drama

Just as the unfolding plot of a thriller with its unexpected twists and turns keeps us gripped, a garden pathway that tracks from side to side, such as in this exotic urban garden designed by Declan Buckley, or veers unexpectedly to take us on a journey, makes for a more interesting story.

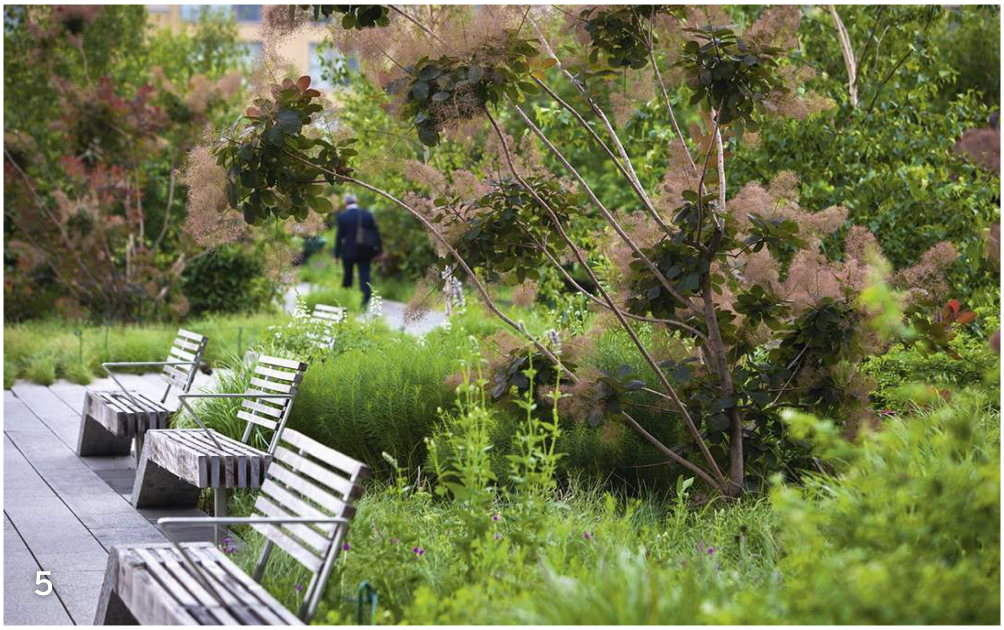
4 Hidden depths

At Rousham, William Kent's masterpiece in Oxfordshire, visitors are led on an intimate and emotive journey through the garden with endless views and surprises creating a real sense of progression. This serpentine rill pulls you through sequences of darkness and light; through dark yew towards the shimmering Cold Bath. It is totally alluring, as you never see the whole rill at once.

The sumptuous photography that fills the pages of *Gardens Illustrated* captures much of the magic of the world's most beautiful gardens. Sensational plantings at their seasonal peak are rendered in the gorgeous light of early morning or late afternoon. But there are some things that a camera cannot convey and it is a mistake to think of a three-dimensional space as a sequence of static two-dimensional 'views'. This ignores the immersive qualities of a garden and the importance of movement within the space.

It's one thing to create impressive set-piece views, but the real challenge and reward is in bringing unity through well-considered linking and overlapping of garden scenes. Maybe it's better to think as a cinematographer filming a long take rather than thinking like a photographer composing a series of still images. The opening scenes of a film are often more about creating an atmosphere and introducing one or two characters than revealing the whole storyline. So too, entering a garden: it should be like stepping through a portal into a new world and not knowing exactly what you'll discover inside. Even in a small space, you can create intrigue by partially obscuring a view; it may be the planting of a singular tall, rush-like *Restio*, a wall of semi-transparent *Molinia* grasses, a lacy-stemmed shrub, or a window cut into a hedge.

The late garden designer Russell Page's neoclassical garden, Villa Silvio Pellico, outside Turin, is built on a series of horizontal levels. He used hornbeam hedging, stone-edged pools, steps and level changes to create harmonious shifts in perspective that gently draw you in to explore his hillside ▷



5 Lines of beauty

Designer Piet Oudolf has given each section of the High Line in New York a distinct character – essential to keep interest in a long, linear park, such as this. In each section the plants, especially the trees, are distinct players in the action luring the visitor to explore further along the winding track.

6 Height of style

In this garden, designer and architect Christopher Bradley-Hole, has given a three-dimensional spin to a grid design. Opaque cubes of the tall grass *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' act as a soft foil to the more solid beech hedge.

7 Marked contrast

Transitions don't have to be subtle. The late garden designer Russell Page was a master of the dramatic progression. Here, in his neoclassical garden, Villa Silvio Pellico, near Turin, a formal knot garden seems almost to float above the more relaxed woodland garden on the hillside below.

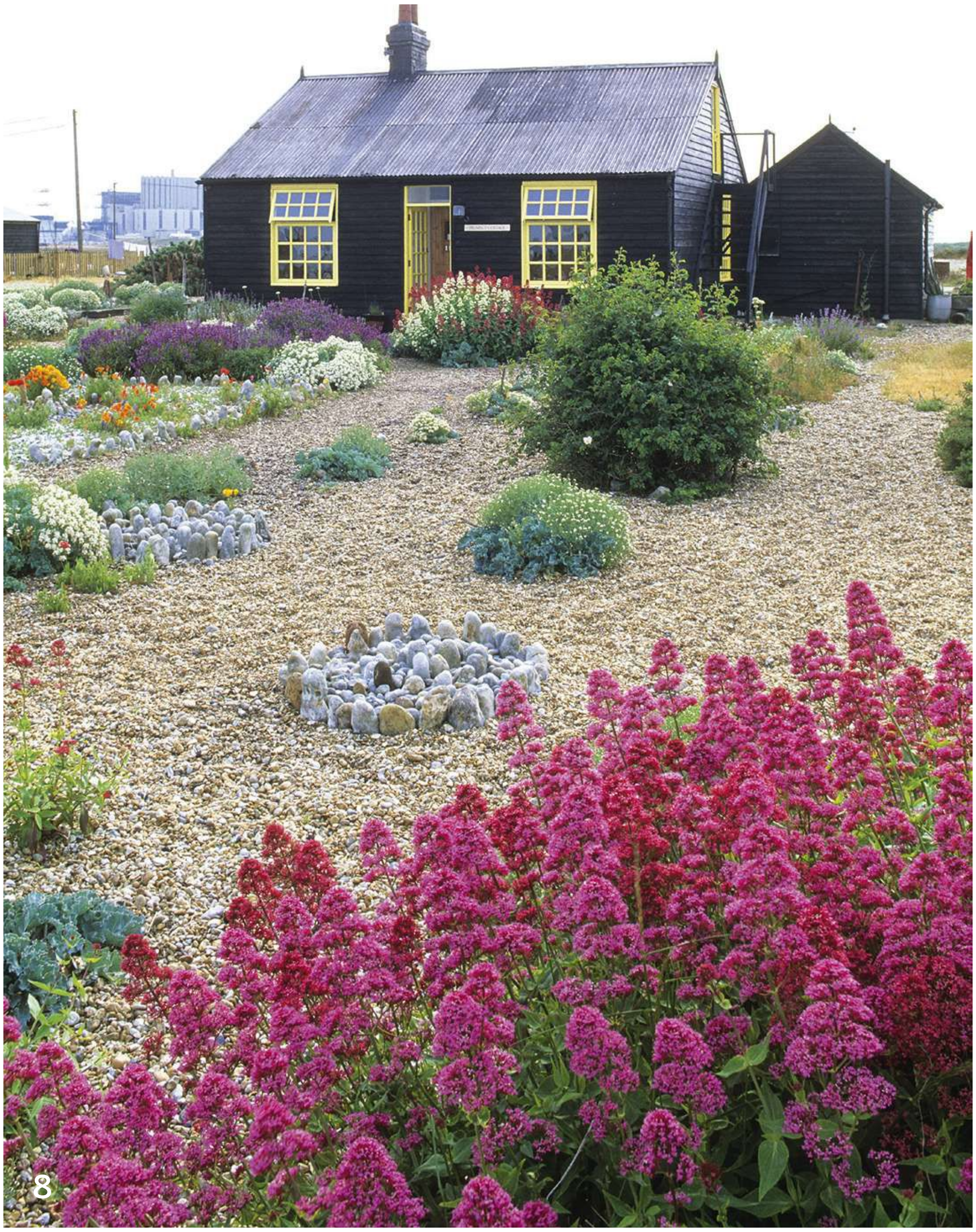
5 CLAIRE TAKACS; 6 MARIANNE MAJERUS / DESIGN: CHRISTOPHER BRADLEY-HOLE; 7 HOWARD SOOLEY / DESIGN: RUSSELL PAGE

▷ masterpiece for yourself. The result is a garden that feels like it's been there for ever.

On a more modest scale, the garden of Hugo Colville and Neti de Mestre, Ty Glas in Pembrokeshire, started out as featureless farm fields around a derelict cottage, and they created a totally immersive world with the same eternal qualities as Villa Silvio Pellico. The pair dug a lake, created an island and around the house made ridges that shelter the garden. There are no set views. Shaggy box balls snake into meadow dotted with pink orchids, while low grassy banks decorated with orange hawkbit (*Pilosella aurantiaca*) mark transitions through the space.

The High Line in New York cuts through the Lower West Side of Manhattan's skyline. It's an old, elevated railway, both narrow and long (it takes almost half an hour to walk the length of it). A long, linear park could become monotonous but Piet Oudolf keeps it lively by introducing different characters along the way: the burgundy, candyfloss-like blooms of the smoke bush *Cotinus* gives way to tightly packed birch groves and, in the distance, clumps of *Rhus*. Between the moments of drama an understorey matrix of grasses ensures smooth fades from one scene to the next. Dots and drifts of accent plants – *Vernonia*, *Echinacea*, *Sanguisorba* – signal transitions of mood.

The garden at Prospect Cottage in Dungeness, once home to late film-maker Derek Jarman, is set within a bleak shingle landscape shadowed by a nuclear power plant. There are no fences and it's not immediately clear where the garden begins and ends. It is sparsely planted and the shingle is an overwhelming environment – you see it for miles around and



ANDREW LAWSON / MARIANNE MAJERUS / DEREK JARMAN / PROSPECT COTTAGE, DUNGENESS

8 Shingle minded

In his garden at Prospect Cottage near Dungeness, the late film director Derek Jarman used small circles of driftwood, shells and flints to create miniature worlds within the shingle substrate. Punctuated by areas of colour, the shingle dominates, setting the tone and bringing cohesion to the garden, and creates a seamless transition to the surrounding coastline.

Discover more

Film

For insights into Villa Silvio Pellico and Prospect Cottage you can find short lyrical films on both gardens at **nowness.com/series/great-gardens**

Books

Learn more about the late, great garden designer Russell Page in his seminal work: ***The Education of a Gardener*** by Russell Page (1962). The book is discussed in greater detail in Penelope Hobhouse's selection of her favourite gardening books on page 97.

you hear it and feel it underfoot. It is the setting for Jarman's collection of garden episodes, comprising driftwood, rusty iron objects, collections of stones and plants from the shore – sea kale, horned yellow poppies and blue viper's bugloss. The shingle is like the grading of film stock or a photographic filter; it gives the garden a underlying unity of hue and texture.

Starting with a unifying species or material helps a design to hold together. Not many of us have shingle in our gardens, but what we do have is grass, stone and brick, all of which can flow like a river through the composition of a garden, establishing the immersive quality of a self-contained world.

Just like great works of cinema, great gardens are created with a coherent vision, a guiding theme that encompasses everything, from the widest panorama right down to the tiniest detail. It's surprising just how many of the tools and techniques of film-making can be transferred to garden design. Thinking about location and props, character and narrative, atmosphere and mood, movement and pace helps a garden designer first conceive of and then bring into being the special world of a truly immersive garden – one that leaps the gap between reality and the imagination.

Unfortunately for gardeners, our characters don't always stick to the script, and we can't call on special effects and post-production trickery to help us out. But unlike a film director, who has to settle on a single, final edit to be seen on the silver screen, a garden will give an infinite number of performances throughout the seasons, each different, and the process of editing and refining never ends. □

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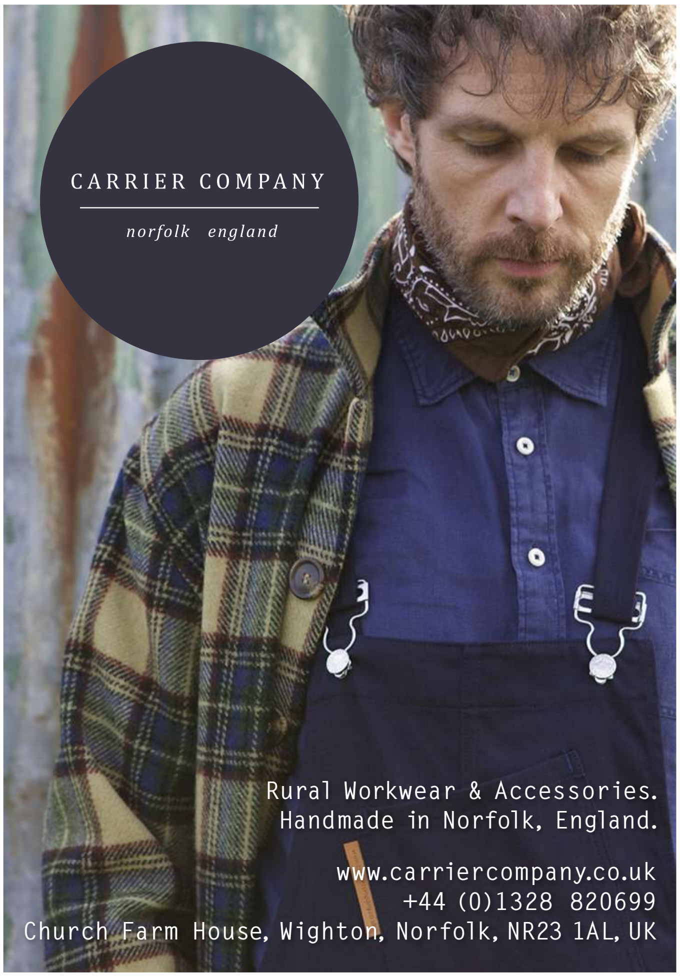

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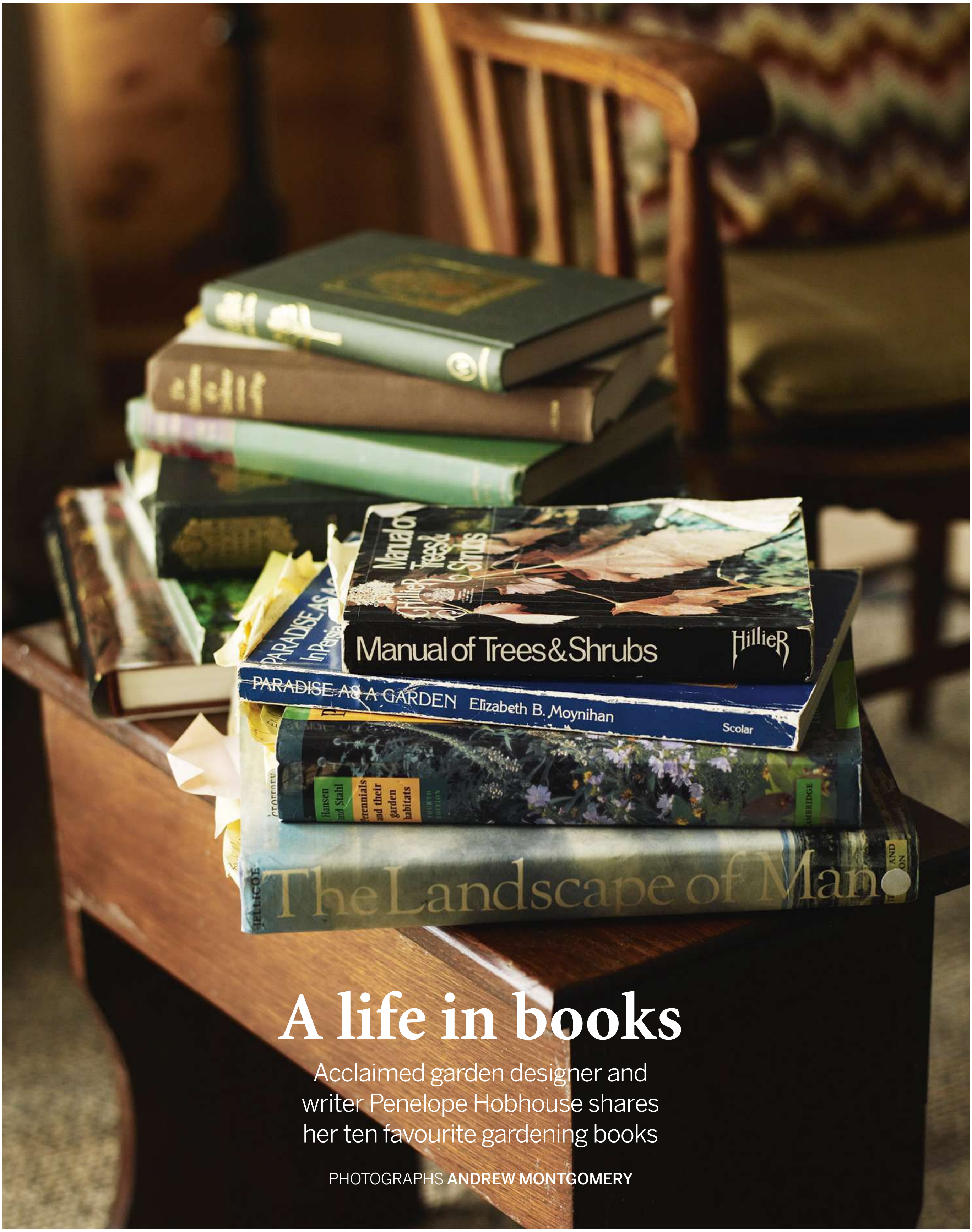
Manual of Trees & Shrubs
Hillier
Paradise as a Garden
Elizabeth B. Moynihan
Scolar
Hansen and Stahl
Perennials and their garden habitats
The Landscape of Man
Jellicoe

A life in books

Acclaimed garden designer and writer Penelope Hobhouse shares her ten favourite gardening books

PHOTOGRAPHS **ANDREW MONTGOMERY**

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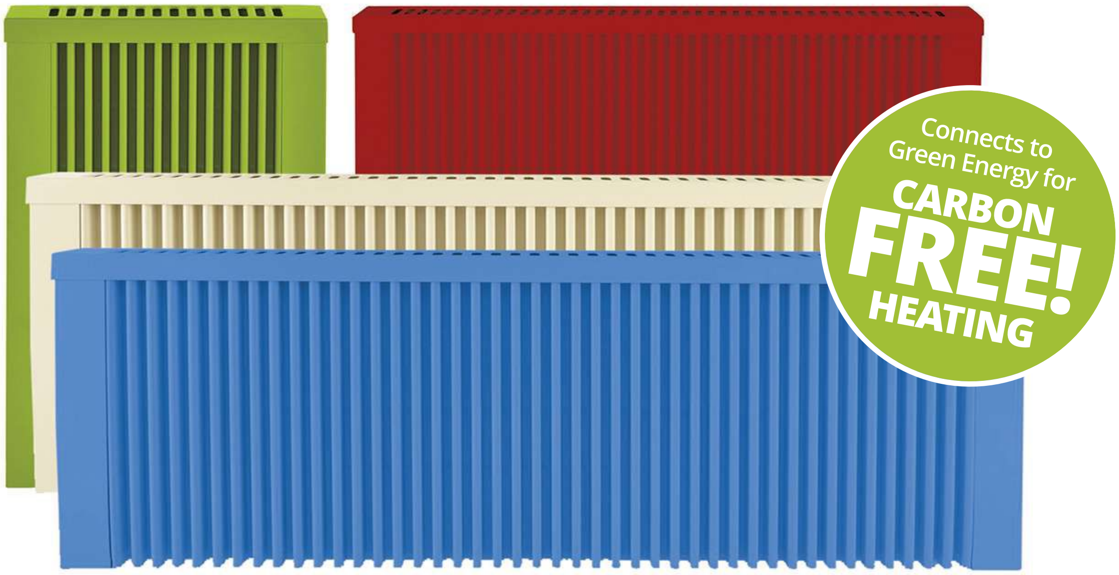

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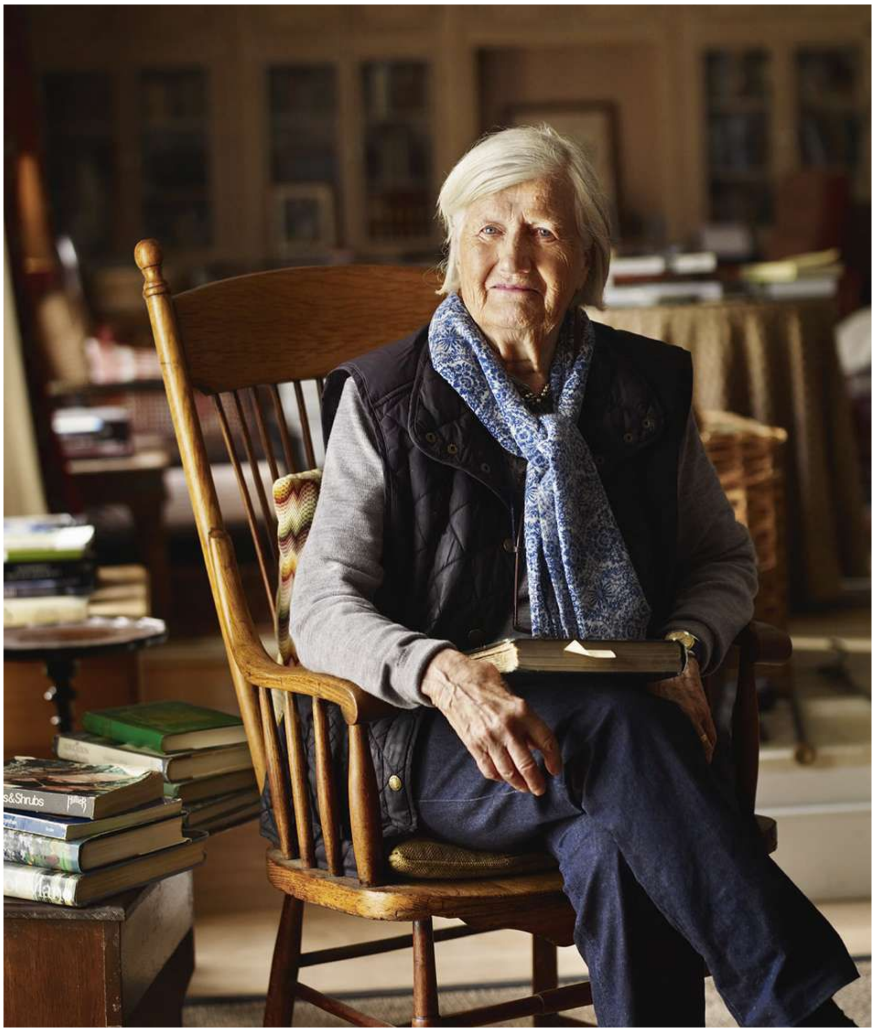


Luckily reading garden books still remains one of my greatest pleasures. It is both informative but also nostalgic, reminding me of how I learned and changed as a gardener, writer and designer. I now own not only a horticultural 'working' library but also one reflecting a more recent interest in Islamic styles and their religious significance. I keep them in separate rooms, as Islamic stuff, mainly relating to Iran, India and Central Asia, marked a big change in my life. Much of my garden design work meant constant travelling (mainly in the USA and Europe) and jetlag. I was in my seventies when I gave that up and instead went east, to Iran, Central Asia and northern India. I had a new passion unravelling the history of the spiritual Islamic garden.

Now at 85 and retired, I am totally self-indulgent. Reading is no longer for research but for pleasure. It is hard to list my ten favourites so I'll try to relate them to my own experience. There are the books that became an integral part of my working life: plant reference books, which trace a learning curve as a practical gardener and plant lover. I started to garden by enjoying the Latin names of my favourite flowers. I am still happy to have my brain stimulated by lists of plants for suitable schemes, and I collected books that constantly introduced me to the best. Then there are books on garden design and history. It was important to become familiar with the great Renaissance designers and their influence on 18th-century Britain. Gradually I found my interest in foreign gardens and influences taking over from a concentration on English style. Writing a book (with Patrick Taylor) about European gardens led to stimulating travel and wider reading.

Finally, I remember that true inspiration comes from landscape, whether mountain or desert, but we still need the written word to help us understand the beauty and importance of preserving our environment and defining our role in it.

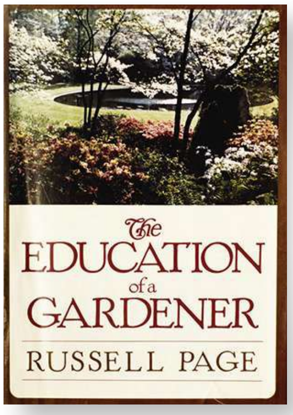
Design and the history of gardening

GARDEN
DESIGN
Sylvia Crowe

Garden Design

by Sylvia Crowe

Books on garden design and the history of gardening can be considered together as they are dependent on each other. My first choice must be that of the landscape architect Sylvia Crowe who published *Garden Design* in 1958. It remains the most comprehensive book on design I know. Her opening chapter is on history, to introduce the reader to jewel-like desert gardens and the Arabic-Islamic garden. She covers Far Eastern developments, the Italian Renaissance garden, French formality, English garden development and finally the contemporary garden in the West. But it is not all history – she weaves in design theory as she describes historical settings. By the time you get to part two, in which she discusses principles, you feel you have already absorbed her theories.



The Education of a Gardener

by Russell Page

The Education of a Gardener (published in 1962) by the great modern garden designer, Russell Page, is a classic. It is a

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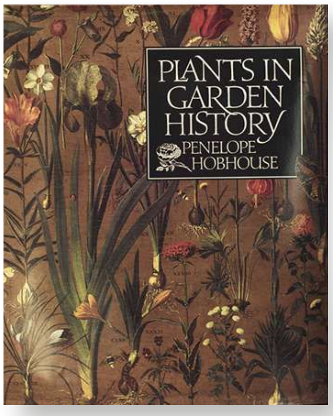
restful, 'dipping in' book I keep by my bed. I have visited many of his gardens in Europe (particularly Italy) and in the USA. He thinks of a garden as a work of art; he is always composing a picture in which every detail has been planned. Colour and texture of leaf and flower rank equally with the architecture of substantial plants. The surrounding landscape, climate and soil type set the scene. One of the author's major interests is the use of water. He describes his visits to great gardens and discusses what they taught him, and in doing so teaches me how to look and appreciate essential features.

> *Page is always composing a picture in which every detail has been planned*

The Formal Garden in England

by Reginald Blomfield

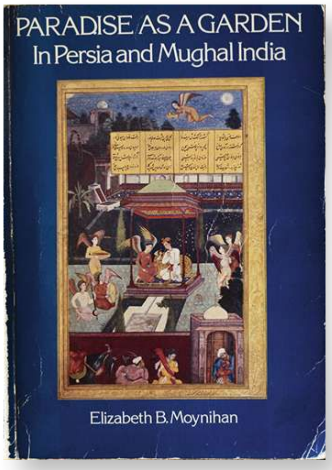
Reginald Blomfield's classic is quite different to Russell Page's book above. Published in 1892, it is a historical survey of how gardens can not only be related to the house, a reflection of the architecture, but also settle both building and garden into the surrounding landscape. Blomfield is violently opposed to the contemporary writings of William Robinson whose *The Wild Garden* and *The English Flower Garden* (published 1880s) recommended a new natural-style design. Blomfield set off serious controversy and for this it is worth rereading. He makes you think where you stand in the argument which still reverberates today. I am mostly in favour of Blomfield because, although appreciating Robinson for his use of hardy plants, much of his writings have been misunderstood and have given modern gardeners a licence to neglect essential structure in garden design.



Plants in Garden History

by Penelope Hobhouse

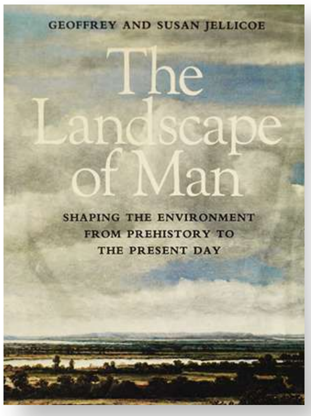
There are two other history books that are very personal to me. In 1992 I wrote *Plants in Garden History* as a study of plant availability and discovery through the ages. How much did the great movements of garden history depend on plant novelties brought back by the intrepid explorers? I relished the research and learnt history starting with Egyptian tomb gardens and Persian paradise garden, to Louis XIV's Versailles and on to the explosive 19th-century introductions that gave the Victorians colourful bedding-out flowers.



Paradise as a Garden in Persia and Mughal India

by Elizabeth B Moynihan

After writing *Plants in Garden History* I went to Iran and had my first serious taste of the symbolic Islamic garden, although I'd visited the Alhambra many years earlier. I had already discovered Elizabeth B Moynihan's masterpiece, which is the other book that's very personal to me. Published in 1979, *Paradise as a Garden in Persia and Mughal India* remains the best introduction to this world. Highly readable, it is a brilliant synopsis of garden-making from Cyrus the Great's garden in the 540s BC until the decline of the great Mughal dynasty after the death of the Taj Mahal's builder, the Emperor Shah Jahan, in 1666 AD.



The Landscape of Man

by Geoffrey and Susan Jellicoe

My next choice, written in 1979, is also a masterpiece: *The Landscape of Man: Shaping the Environment from Prehistory to the Present Day*. Already well-known for books on garden history and theory, the authors cover almost all the topics we have already discussed, but with an emphasis on the garden as part of the environment, so perhaps this is the only book you need.

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AND
THEIR GARDENS
BY
EDITH WHARTON
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Italian Villas and Their Gardens

by Edith Wharton

Edith Wharton's *Italian Villas and Their Gardens* (1903) has been my faithful companion throughout Italian visits. The whole book, with pictures by Maxfield Parrish, has an aura. It captures the essence of Renaissance taste in a way no modern production can compete with.

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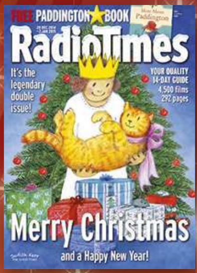
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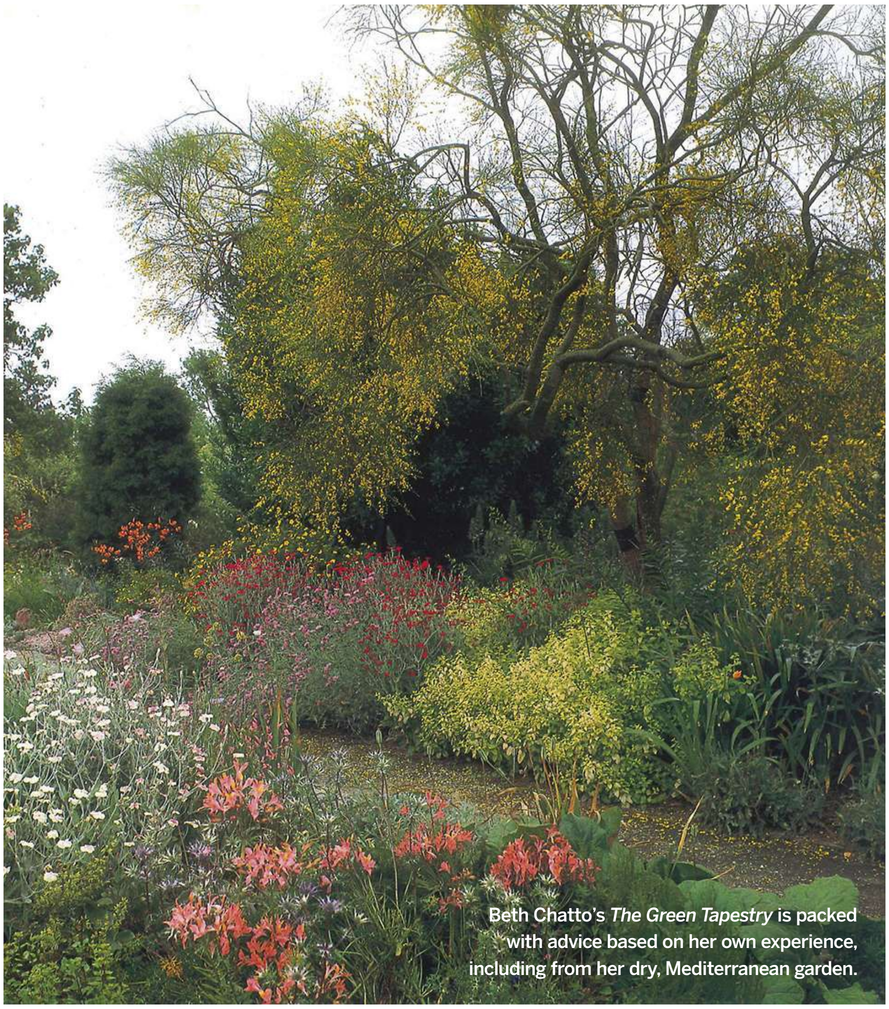
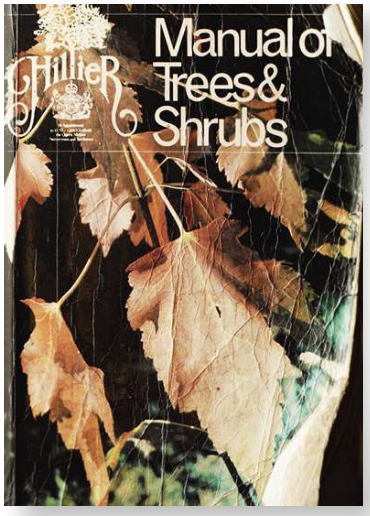


Beth Chatto's *The Green Tapestry* is packed with advice based on her own experience, including from her dry, Mediterranean garden.

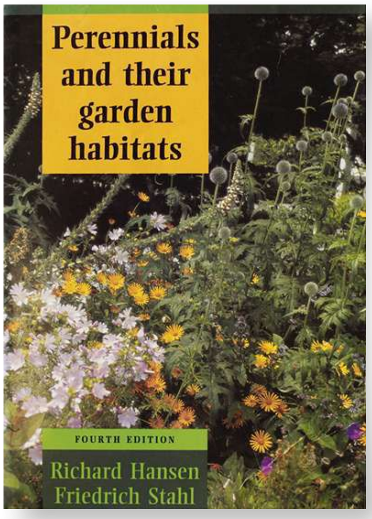
Reference books



Manual of Trees & Shrubs

by Hillier

Reference books lie in a small heap beside my desk. For me the most valuable is Hillier's *Manual of Trees and Shrubs*. I have various editions, all heavily annotated by me or my husband. Although I love lots of perennials and annuals I cannot envisage a garden without a framework of woody plants to define spaces, create shadows and, whether evergreen or deciduous, give winter structure.

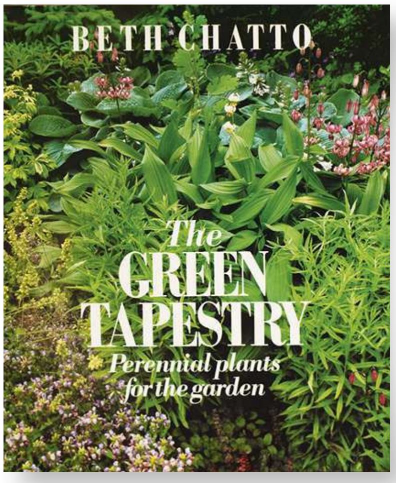


Beth Chatto has taught us to garden better using suitable plants

Perennials and Their Garden Habitats

by Richard Hansen and
Friedrich Stahl

The astonishingly detailed *Perennials and Their Garden Habitats* (translated from German in 1993) has become my new bible for planning my own garden. Originally intended for Hansen's landscape students at Weihenstephan near Munich, it is now widely consulted by all gardeners Unlike other dictionaries, it puts a greater emphasis on the ecological needs of a plant than on their aesthetic value in border schemes. It was an eye-opener.



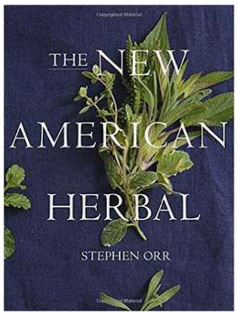
The Green Tapestry

by Beth Chatto

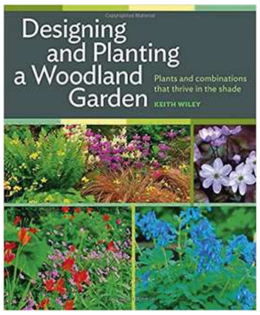
No library can be complete without at least one volume of Beth Chatto's illuminating books. I owe so much to her. *The Green Tapestry* seems a good choice as it includes many descriptions of her own garden schemes and plant lists. I first discovered what she stood for at her display at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 1976. She was the first exhibitor to display her plants according to their needs of dry or damp, shade or sun and, importantly, acid or alkaline soil, besides having a keen eye for the aesthetics of plant schemes. At the time she was ahead of everyone. Since then she has taught us to garden better, using suitable plants in sustainable ways. □

Our favourite books of 2015

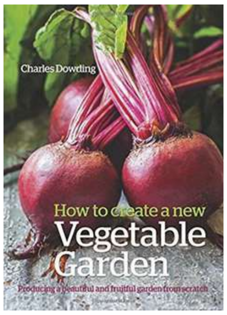
A small selection of the books we've reviewed and loved over the past year


THE NEW AMERICAN HERBAL
STEPHEN ORR

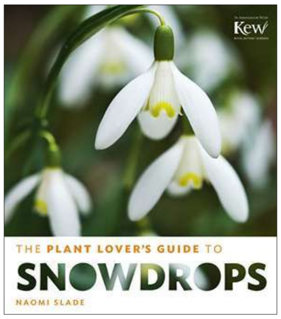
The New American Herbal by Stephen Orr 'A fresh, stylish and modern compendium on cultivating herbs in America for healthy eating – with stunning photographs.' *Review by Alys Fowler.* **Crown Publications, £22.50, offer price £20. ISBN 978-0449819937**


Designing and Planting a Woodland Garden
Plants and combinations that thrive in the shade
KEITH WILEY

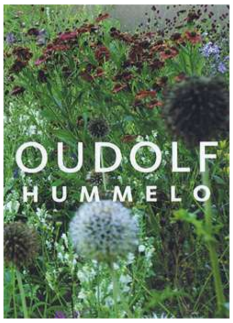
Designing and Planting a Woodland Garden by Keith Wiley 'In a project that's not for the faint-hearted, author Keith Wiley creates a woodland garden at Wildside from a bare field.' *Review by Rosemary Alexander*. **Timber Press, £25, offer price £22. ISBN 978-1604693850**


Charles Dowding
How to create a new Vegetable Garden
Producing a beautiful and fruitful garden from scratch

How to Create a New Vegetable Garden by Charles Dowding 'It is one of the most inspiring, abundant edible gardens I've seen and it's impossible not to want to learn some of its lessons.' *Review by Mark Diacono.* **Green Books, £19.99, offer price £17.99. ISBN 978-0857842442**


Kew
THE PLANT LOVER'S GUIDE TO
SNOWDROPS
NAOMI SLADE

The Plant Lover's Guide to Snowdrops by Naomi Slade 'Authoritative and well-illustrated monograph covering these winter flowers.' *Review by Stephanie Donaldson.* **Timber Press, £17.99, offer price £15.99. ISBN 978-1604694352**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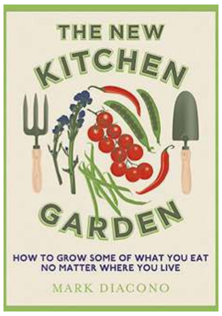
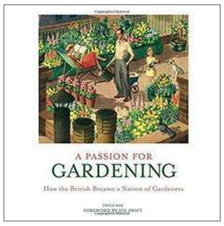
HUMMELO

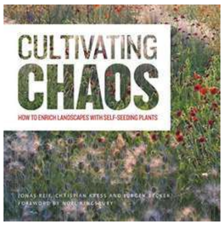
Oudolf Hummelo by Piet Oudolf and Noël Kingsbury 'Oudolf is part of a movement too varied to be categorised that takes inspiration from nature and whose underlying tenets are sustainability and biodiversity'. *Review by John Hoyland.* **Monacelli Press, £40, offer price £36. ISBN 978-1580934183**


THE NEW KITCHEN GARDEN
HOW TO GROW SOME OF WHAT YOU EAT NO MATTER WHERE YOU LIVE
MARK DIACONO

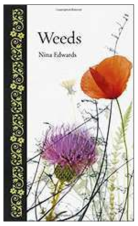
The New Kitchen Garden by Mark Diacono 'His emphasis is on things that are expensive or impossible to buy in shops, on the fruit and veg that only taste truly sublime when eaten the second they've been picked.' *Review by Jodie Jones.* **Saltyard Books, £25, offer price £20. ISBN 978-1444734782**


A PASSION FOR GARDENING

A Passion for Gardening by Twigs Way 'She takes a frank delight in the more bonkers aspects of the journey'. *Review by Ambra Edwards.* **Prion Books, £14.99, offer price £12.99. ISBN 978-1853759222**


CULTIVATING CHAOS
HOW TO ENRICH LANDSCAPES WITH SELF-SEEDING PLANTS

Cultivating Chaos by Jonas Reif 'Encourages gardeners to embrace the anarchic ways of self-sowing plants'. *Review by Rory Dusoir*. **Timber Press, £25, offer price £22.50. ISBN 978-1604696523**


Weeds
Nina Edwards

Weeds by Nina Edwards 'The very word has gardeners bristling with hostility, but this book regards those tenacious members of the plant family discerningly'. *Review by Caroline Beck.* **Reaktion Books, £16, offer price £14.40. ISBN 978-1780234274**

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Offers apply to the reviewed books as indicated. Other titles listed here, and mentioned in the magazine (excluding Penelope Hobhouse's choice of books in this month's books special), are available to order via gardensillustrated.com/bookshop. Alternatively, call 01326 569444 with your credit or debit card details, or send a cheque payable to *Gardens Illustrated* to: ***Gardens Illustrated* Bookshop, PO Box 60, Helston TR13 0TP.** Bookshop prices include p&p within UK, except orders under £10, which incur a £1.25 postage charge. Worldwide delivery available with p&p calculated per order, please call **01326 569444** for a quote. All books are offered subject to availability. Please allow 7-10 days for delivery. Your contract is with Sparkle Direct Ltd.

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Curves in all the right places!

November in the garden is traditionally the time for having bonfires, pruning the deadwood and generally readying things for the onset of winter. Worthy and necessary work though this is, I am of the school of thought that whilst acknowledging we have my least favourite season to endure, now is a good time to focus on the coming year.

The ability to take refuge in dreaming up potentially life changing projects for your garden, that can improve the quality of your leisure time, is something I freely admit to. It definitely gets me through some of the dark and depressing nights. I've indulged in fantasies of redesigning planting areas and decks, and have imagined pergolas that transform the ordinary to the extraordinary. Thoughts of these projects can act as a glimmer of hope or a beacon at the end of the wintery tunnel of gloom.

So here is something new from Jacksons that could be the inspiration for your very own spring project - The Curve is a sleek and simple structure, that arches gracefully from the ground - there's no need for posts in this seemingly gravity defying contemporary garden shelter.

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There are also full details on our *'beat the spring rush'* special offer there too – Place your order this winter, have it delivered on a date specified by you and we will give you half price delivery.

Just think, then you will have the satisfaction of knowing you have got ahead of the curve, by beating the rush this spring – sorry, I had to get the curve reference in somewhere!

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Garden lighting feature (pages 58-63)

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CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD COMPETITION, P106

HOW TO ENTER Enter online at gardensillustrated.com or post the answer with your name and address to: *Gardens Illustrated* 228/Christmas Crossword, PO Box 501, Leicester LE94 0AA.

TERMS & CONDITIONS Promoter: Immediate Media Company Bristol Limited. Entrants must be UK residents aged 18 years or older, excluding the Promoter's employees. By entering, you agree to be bound by all the rules of the promotion. Only one entry per person allowed. No responsibility accepted for lost, delayed, ineligible or fraudulent entries. Closing date for entries is noon on **13 January 2016**. The prize is a pair of Tobisho SR-1 secateurs with leather holster from Niwaki. Winner will be notified by **22 January 2016.** The draw is final and no correspondence will be entered into. For details of the winners send an SAE to Immediate Media Company Bristol, Tower House, Fairfax Street, Bristol BS1 3BN within two months of the closing date. If any winner is unable to be contacted within one month of the closing date, the Promoter will offer the prize to a runner-up. Promoter reserves the right to substitute the prize with one of the same or greater value but there is no cash alternative. Immediate Media Company Limited (publishers of *Gardens Illustrated*) would love to send you newsletters, together with special offers, and other promotions. If you would not like to receive these please write 'NO INFO' on your entry. Niwaki would like to send you a one-off email with up-to-date details of products and offers. If you would like to receive this, please write 'NIWAKI INFO' on your entry.

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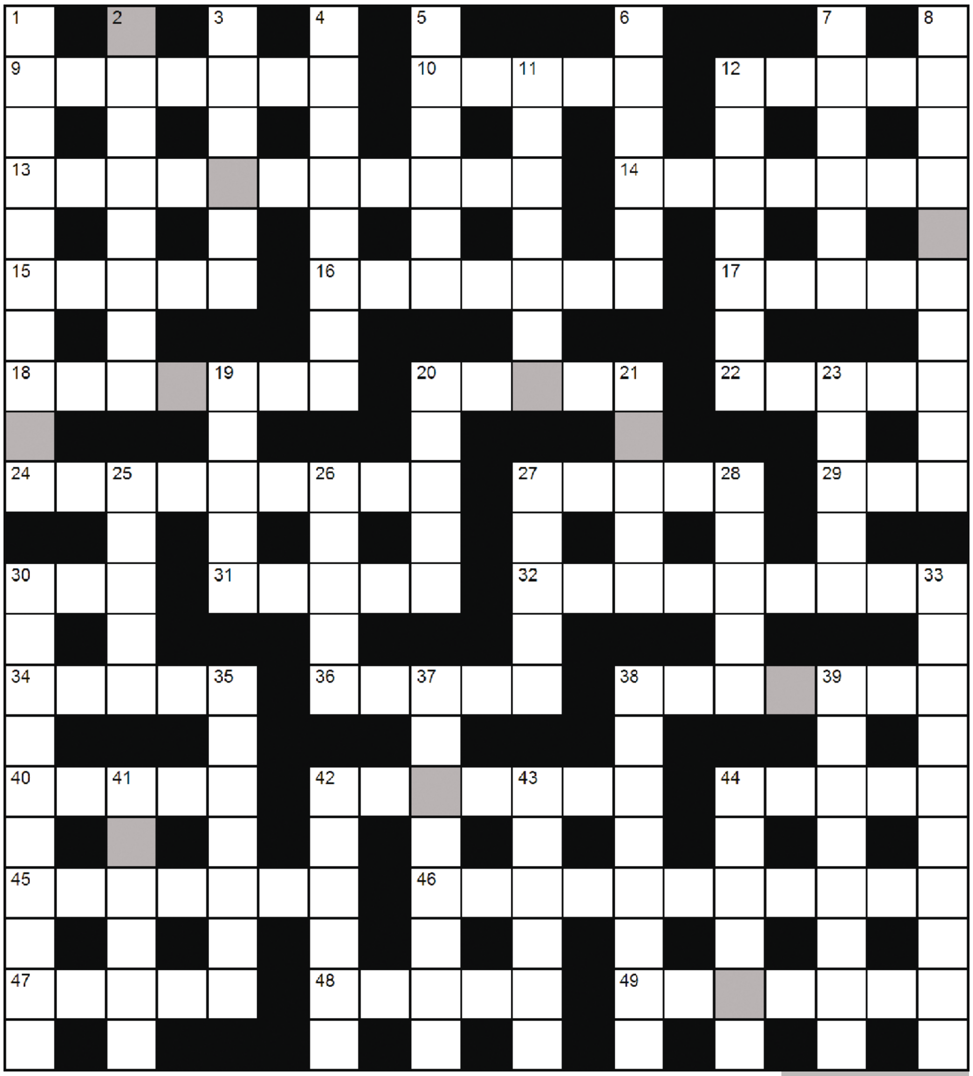
Christmas crossword



Solve our festive puzzle for gardeners and you could win a pair of secateurs from Niwaki

ACROSS

9 At once I rearranged monkshood or wolfs-bane (7)
10 See 29 across
12 Buffeted by wind, heads of Belladonna lily now damaged (5)
13 Which will make tracks to your cabbages? (11)
14 A *Quercus* with holly-like leaves – one removed from Oklahoma, perhaps (4,3)
15 Tender perennials with showy flowers, included in 'African' nasturtiums (5)
16/44 down Daddy-longlegs grub – donned by biker? (13)
17 Salmon-pink chrysanthemum dead inside iris (5)
18 ___ Dowding, famous for his 'no-dig' gardening (7)
20 Pleasing sound of a compact *Aquilegia* series (5)
22 Thorny shrub – good variety of rose (5)
24 Common name for *Solidago* and mullein – and/or *Rosa*, perhaps (6,3)
27 Describes leaf with distinct divisions (5)
29/10 Best-known variety of *Photinia*, Christmas card favourite (3,5)
30 See 31 across
31/30 *Abies procera*, a popular Christmas tree (5,3)
32 Organic insecticide obtained from chrysanthemums (9)
34 Speaks of removing top from plant stems (5)
36 A common name for *Godetia* is '___ flower' (5)
38 Percy, after whom a rhododendron is named – one of three Christmas visitors? (7)
40 Plant, also called plantain lily, has to change (5)
42 Type of allium in Welsh allotment (7)
44 Succulent (5)
45 Apple like 'Discovery', sweet? (7)
46 A *Robinia*, in actual fact? (5,6)
47 Plants like *Phragmites* wither finally, scattering seed (5)
48 Graduated measure of a bulb's leaf-base (5)
49 Observe damaged rose – not a pleasant sight! (7)

DOWN

1 ___ *hookeriana* commonly called 'Christmas box' (10)
2 Aster-like flower damaging boot nail! (8)
3 A clematis group commonly called Leather Flower – in Calvi or Naples (6)
4 Leaf stalks from soil Pete turned over (8)
5 Samara liable to reveal the genus of *Angelica* tree (6)
6 Part of one 35 down disturbing earth around end of autumn (6)
7 Hue seen in Tresco, Lourdes (6)
8 Britain's only native fritillary (6,4)
11 Flogs catkin-bearing trees! (7)
12 Running to seed – and shutting (7)
19 Flax fabric – row over name (5)
20 Irritating little fly partly amid geraniums (5)
21 Tree trunk sportingly thrown in the air! (5)
23 Less common in winter are redcurrants (5)
25 Relating to the countryside in outer Urals (5)
26 Flowering currant I removed from wild iberis (5)
27 George Russell bred the modern form of this spiky flower (5)
28 Specified times for stoned fruits? (5)
30 Hybrid plant aka tree ivy, produces a fresh date (10)
33 Name of popular cordon tomato – The Mint? (5-5)
35 Pollen-producers meant to change between seasons' start and end (7)
37 Flower of *Linaria* genus – half amphibian, half *Linum*! (8)
38 Dried and shrivelled as a leaf might be (8)
39 Eg potatoes lifted at end of growing season – chief prune? (8)
41 Old county location of Kew's Millennium Seedbank (6)
42 Term for 'bristly' – from gorse to *Anchusa* (6)
43 Showy flowers associated with May and Madonna (6)
44 See 16 across

HOW TO ENTER

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Closing date 13 January 2016.

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ACROSS 1 Plumose **5** Setts **9** Goliath **10** Laurel **11** Cyme **12** Dryad **13** Pick **14** Jekyll **17** Aerates **18** Haricot **20** Potash **22** Knot **23** Neeps **25** Okra **27** China **28** Upright **29** Mangoes **30** Wisley.

DOWN 2 Leggy **3** Mildewy **4** Scald **5** Salad crop **6** Trumpet **7** Seed cases **8** Chrysanthemum **15** Echinacea **16** Laciniate **19** Rotting **21** Troughs **24** Straw **26** Ratte.

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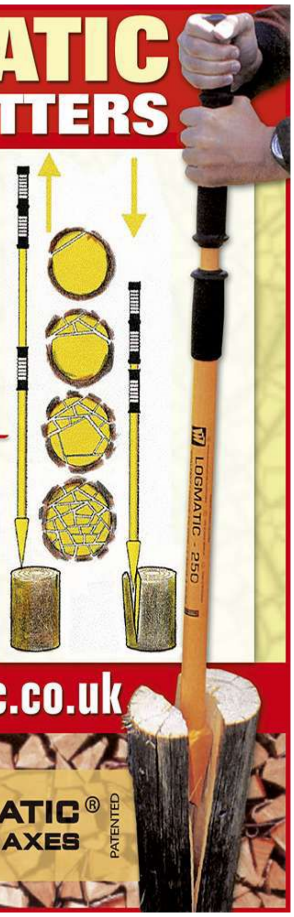

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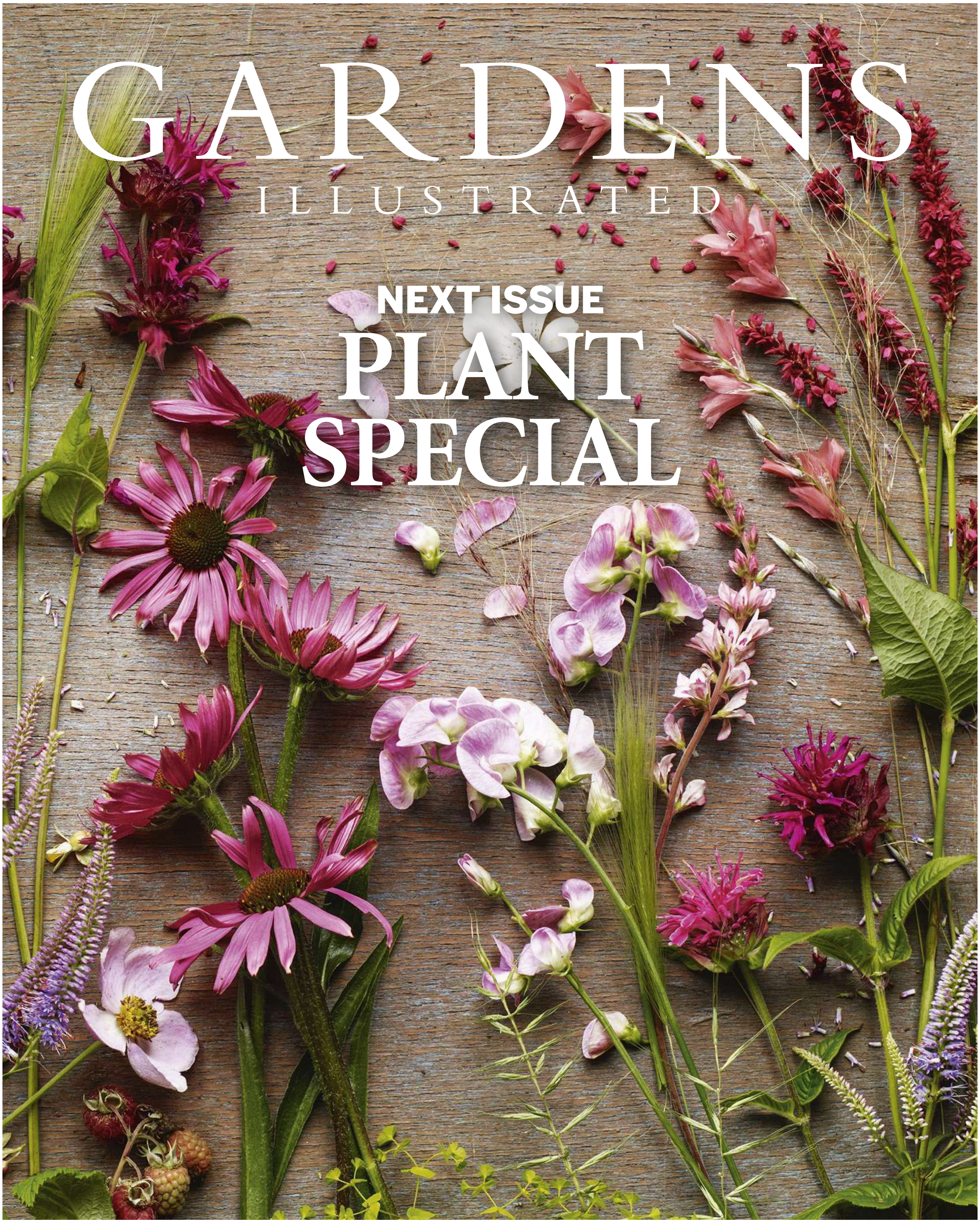
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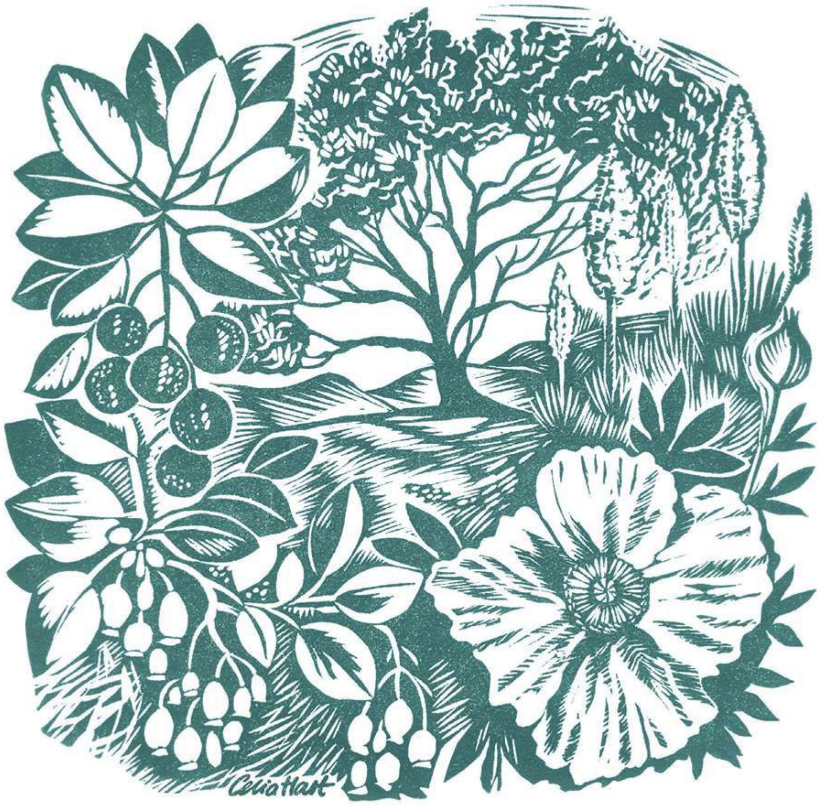
Indigenous species

Frank falls for a Californian native and wonders why it is not planted more on home soil

WORDS **FRANK RONAN** ILLUSTRATION **CELIA HART**



So much you might expect, but the amazement, and my new love, was Arctostaphylos glauca

Native planting, in a garden context, was always a concept that made me shudder a little. Much as I love my weeds, the appeal was always in their ebullience and lust for life rather than their ethnic purity. In the British Isles the roll call of plants that are native for a certainty is so short that a garden made exclusively from them would not be very different from the hedgerow outside of it. Not that that would be likely to deter the usual sort of hair-shirt nettle eater who goes on about native plants but it is not gardening: rather some sort of painfully virtuous opposite.

I do understand that there are places such as Australia where introduced plants were a bit of an ecological disaster but, really, was that the fault of the plants? Surely the original and greater problem was the self-introduction of the European members of a certain particularly arrogant species of fauna. The very same ones that are now hectoring each other about native planting. You don't hear many Australians arguing for handing the whole continent back to the Aboriginals as a solution to their eco-problems. Much easier to stick a few kangaroo paws at the bottom of your suburban garden and castigate those whom you consider to be less enlightened.

Here, in California, where the climate is against us, I expected to be constantly buttonholed on the subject but have only come across one or two people who claimed to plant native. And with them you only had to look around you for an instant before being able to ask where exactly in California that species of jacaranda or wisteria, or whatever you happened to be frowning at, came from. The flustered backtracking that followed would involve a dissembling gesticulation towards some scruffy underplanting and the admission that they had only begun last summer. Here, it is far more important to declare your intentions than to actually do anything, and a declaration made strongly enough can dispense with effort for as long as you can be bothered to make it.

Then, not long after the realities of the drought first began to kick in, I took a guest for a walk in the Matilija wilderness, which forms part of our view on the other side of the valley. The lushness was astonishing. Lush might not seem the right word to a temperate reader but, comparatively, after driving there along roads lined with dying gum trees, it seemed so to us. It was early summer and the time when all the romneyas were in full flower and every open space punctuated with the giant white exclamation marks of *Yucca whipplei*. So much you might expect but the amazement, and my new love, was *Arctostaphylos glauca*. In the same family as heathers and recognisably related to *Arbutus*, this immense manzanita could give a slight impression of an olive at a distance. Closer, it is infinitely more beautiful, with bark the colour of polished oxblood and stiff grey leaves held upright over clusters of white or pink bells, and, later, berries of another bloody hue. Why, my companion and I ricocheted at each other with every new sighting, is this not planted in every garden in California? I had not even seen it stocked in a nursery.

Subsequent searching has not yielded much. A kind friend found three tiny plants in a nursery that was closing down. The internet hasn't come up with anything over five gallons or under a 100 miles away, and they are usually, on closer inspection, varieties intended for ground cover. You can get full grown olive trees with a snap of your fingers but why would you want them when there are greater glories closer at hand? There are parts of the garden where I thought of putting olives but all I can think of is *Arctostaphylos*. Now I've finally gone native, the frustration is unbearable. There is a nursery nearby selling only Australian plants. The irony is killing me. □

Frank Ronan is a novelist who gardens in both the UK and USA.

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